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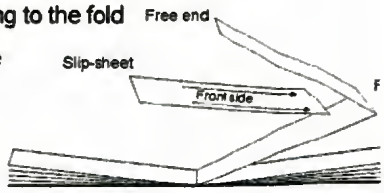

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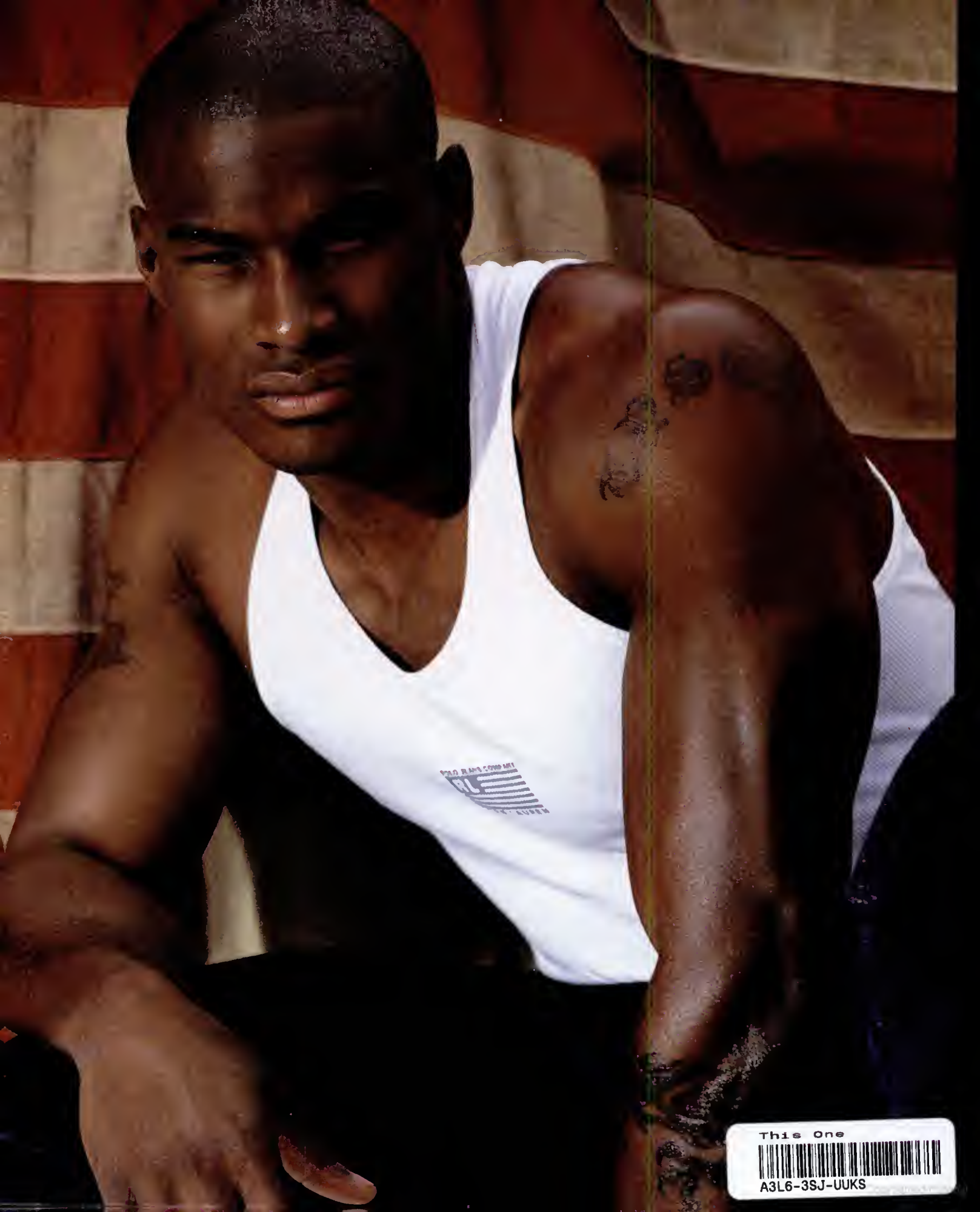

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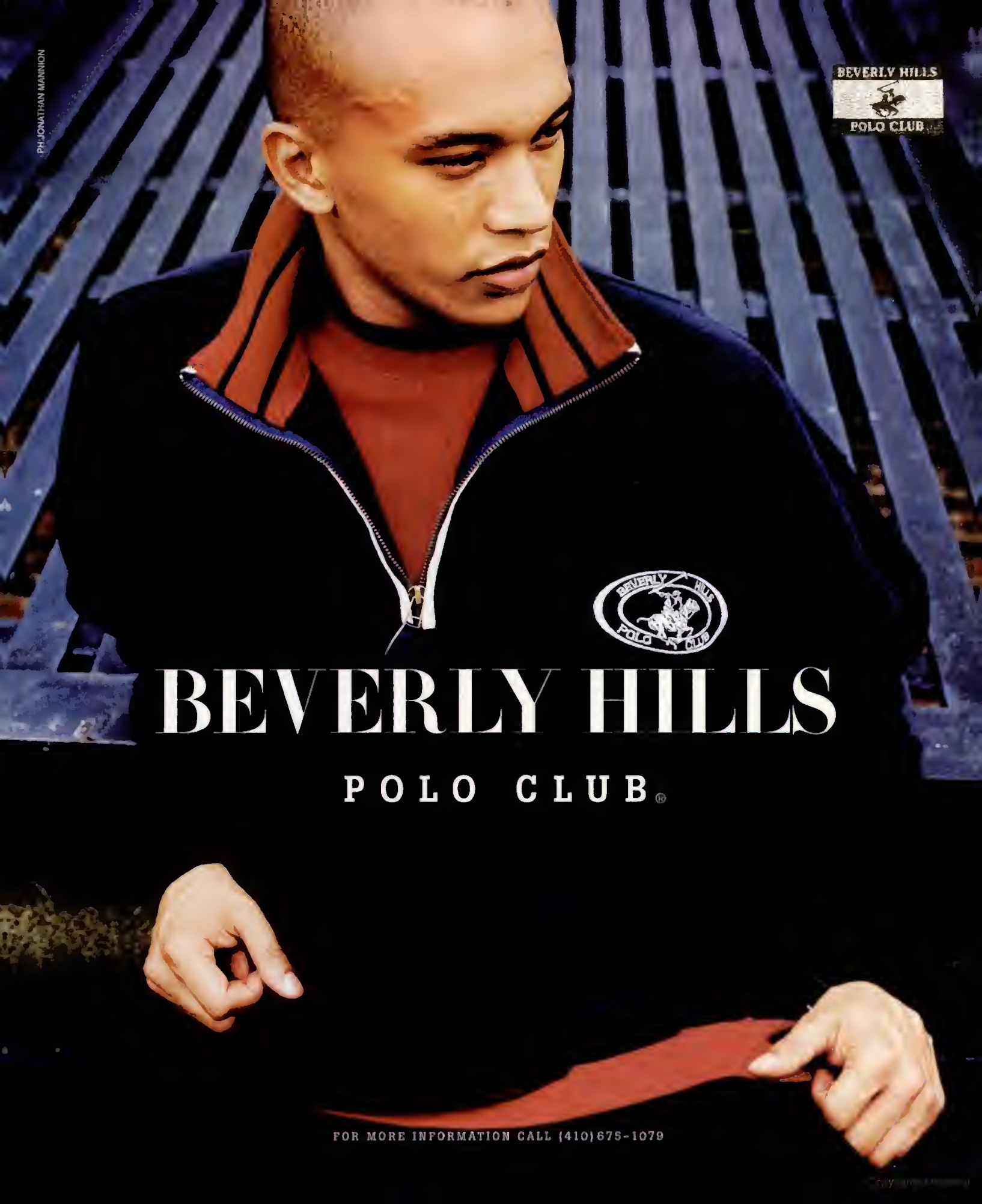
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Dr. Dre, hip hop's most wanted producer, says he's grown-up and made a clean break from the negativity in his past. Now he's busy setting up his own conglomerate, Aftermath Entertainment, and is banking that talent only will prevail. *By Ronin Ro. Photographs by Dan Winters*

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100 CLIP: ABOVE THE LAW
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102 TEARS OF THE CLOWNS
The [illegible] Globetrotters were once the most [illegible] to the world. Now, their new owner [illegible] the clown princes of basketball [illegible] But in the age of Michael, Worm, and [illegible] does anybody care? *[illegible] Photographs by Lois Greenfield*

[illegible] CLIP: OUTKAST
[illegible] their new album *ATLiens* about to drop, [illegible] duo are enjoying some southern comfort. *By [illegible] Photograph by Geoffroy de Boismenu*

[illegible] REMOTE CONTROL
[illegible] fall lineup reflects a paucity of black-[illegible] shows on the major networks and a continued absence of quality multicultural drama anywhere. *By [illegible] Whitehead*

[illegible] THE VIBE Q: SUNNY ROLLINS
One of bebop's last survivors, the world's greatest living saxophonist discusses jazz past and future. *By Ishmael Reed. Photographs by Darryl Turner*

ON THE COVER
Dr. Dre photographed by Dan Winters

ABOVE
Stacey Dash photographed by Robert Maxwell; styling by Tracy L. Walker/Rex; hair by Lori Guidroz/Rex; makeup by Heba Thorisdottir/Rex

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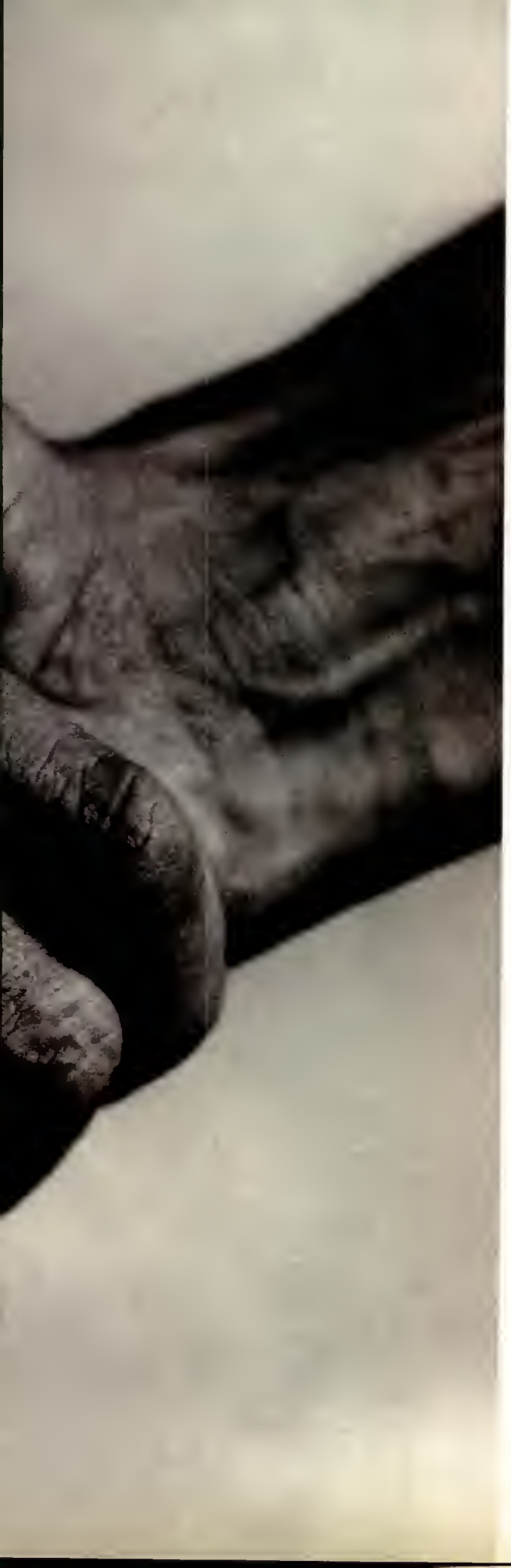

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Check out these special sections!

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The weekly who, what, where, and why in hip hop news.

Roughouse Designs
The paintbrush meets the mouse in this gallery of street-based graphic art.

The Blackspotlight
Bimonthly postings from the Blackspot—the music industry's judge, jury, and executioner.

ABOVE: Sonny Rollins photographed by Darryl Turner

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Ronin Ro

Ronin Ro delves into the post-Death Row–life of Dr. Dre ["Escape From Death Row," page 74] and discovers the truth behind Dre's rift with the company's cofounder, Suge Knight. "Dre is trying desperately to escape the gang mentality," says Ro. "He has the power to unite people on both coasts and does not deserve the brutality coming at him from jealous people at his old label." Ro, who grew up in New York's South Bronx, has published *Gangsta* (St. Martin's Press), a collection of essays, and is currently working on his first novel, *Black Jesus*.

Charisse Jones

San Francisco–born Charisse Jones explores the politics behind the programming at black radio stations ("Radio Activity," page 88). "I hope that audiences will now have a better understanding of what they're listening to," says Jones. "They should know that there are many forces that determine what they hear." Jones is the Brooklyn bureau chief for the *New York Times*, and was a member of the *Los Angeles Times* metro staff that won the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the L.A. riots.

Banu

Turkish-born photographer Banu found Redman ("Red Hot," page 82) to be extremely entertaining: "I never shot celebrities or rap stars before, but it was fun because he's unpredictable and exciting." Banu tried to add a little softness to Redman's hardcore image by getting him to loosen up. "Most of the shots were in his car because that's what he wanted," she says, "and I wanted him to be happy and feel comfortable." Her work has appeared in *Dazed and Confused* and *Self Service* magazines.

Tajima Kazunali

Tajima Kazunali shot this month's fashion layout on men's and women's outerwear ("Into the Night," page 116). Kazunali, who was born in Tokyo, tried to capture the beauty of nighttime in New York City but had an unexpected obstacle to deal with. "I broke my leg a week before," he says, "so I had to shoot while on crutches." Kazunali shot entirely by the Brooklyn Bridge because "the shapes of things in that part of the city are really beautiful to me." He has contributed to *Surface* magazine and directed a video for Towa Tei of Deee-Lite.

Poet/essayist/novelist **Ishmael Reed** interviewed jazz legend Sonny Rollins for this month's VIBE Q ("The Colossus," page 112). Reed hopes that audiences appreciate the continuity between bebop and hip hop: "Technique is what they have in common, and both have been highly controversial." Reed's most recent novel is 1993's *Japanese by Spring*. He's a professor at the University of California at Berkeley.... **Dennis Bernstein**, an editor for the Pacific News Service, and **Ron Nixon**, an associate editor at *Southern Exposure* magazine, wrote this month's story on the mishandled investigation of several church burnings in Mississippi ("Mississippi Burnings," page 94). Bernstein has contributed to the *Village Voice*, *Newsday*, and *Spin*, while Nixon's work has appeared in the *Village Voice*, *YSB*, and *The Nation*.... **Dan Winters**, who shot the cover story on Dr. Dre, has now shot four covers for VIBE. He also shot the Richard Pryor story in VIBE's August, 1995 issue.... **Lois Greenfield**, who's known for her black-and-white photographs of dancers, shot the Harlem Globetrotters ("Tears of the Clowns," page 102). Her work has also appeared in *Elle*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Life*, and *American Photographer*.

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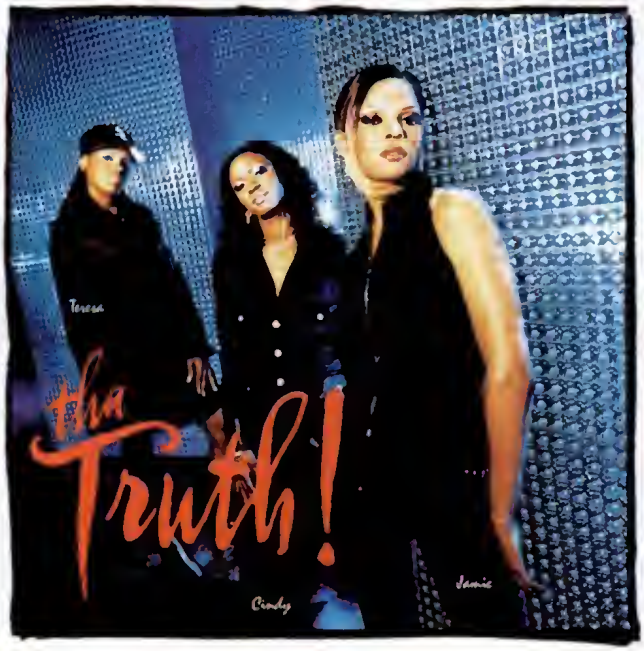

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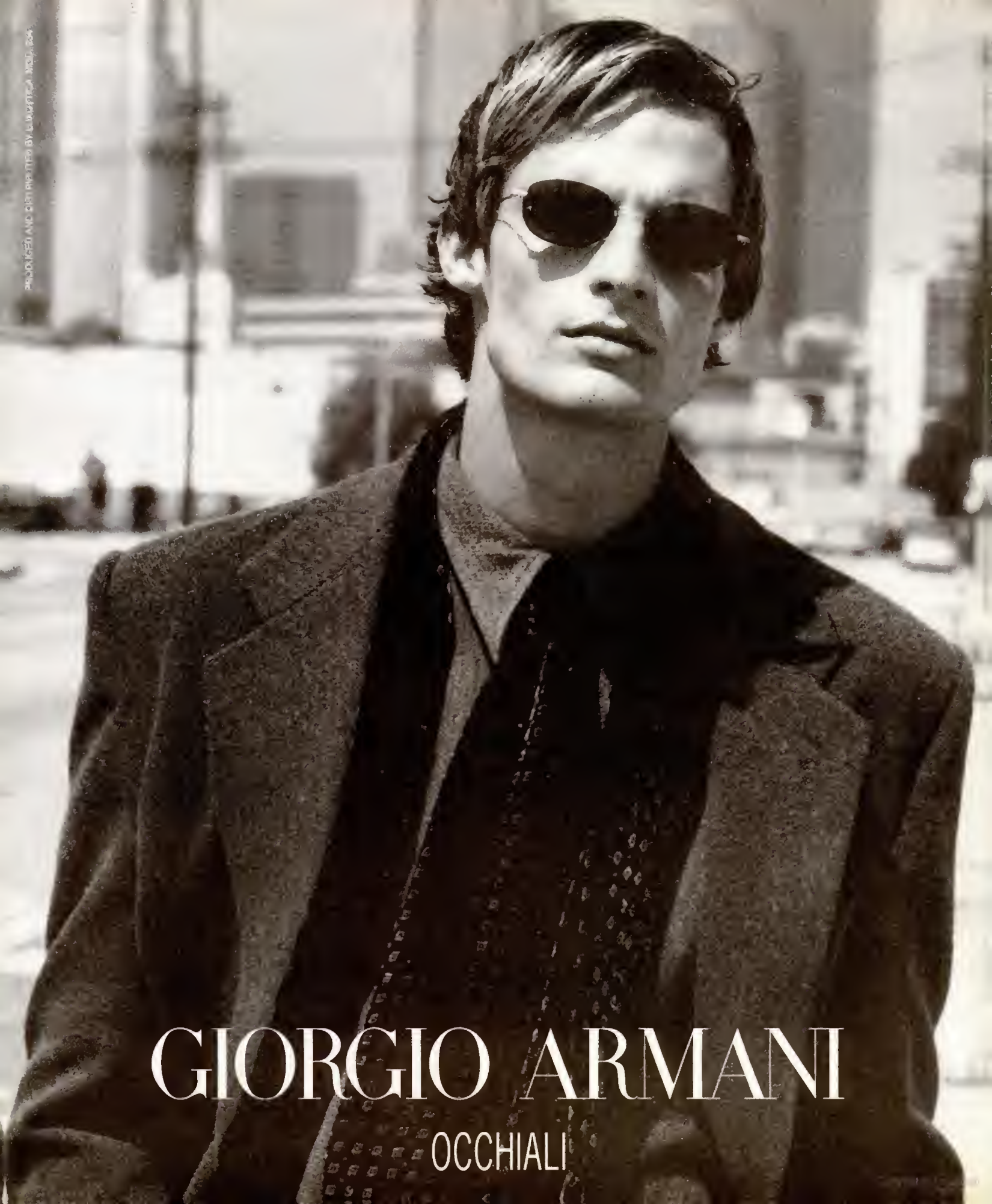
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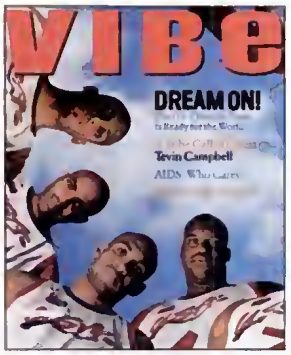

BAD DREAM

No offense to the NBA , the Dream Team, or Charles, Shaq, and Penny ["Ready for the World" by Kevin Powell, August], but damn, with all the deserving hip hop and black music artists out there, why must a music magazine give a cover to athletes who already have their own magazines? Culture, my ass! Sport is sport, and that industry doesn't care what we think.

Chuck D
Roosevelt, NY

NATIVE SONS

The stories on A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, and the Jungle Bros. ["Tongues Untied" by Joan Morgan, Bönz Malone, and Bill Jackson, August] were excellent. I was especially excited to read about Tribe's new album, *Beats, Rhymes, and Life*, not only because Q-Tip has the sexiest voice in hip hop, but also because I've been a fan since he left his wallet in El Segundo.

Hollie Charisi
Baltimore, MD

I was very impressed with the article on A Tribe Called Quest. It's wonderful to hear that there are black male MCs in this world who do not think it's cool to have lots of children by different women, wear Versace, smoke blunts, and call women %$#@*. Much respect to Tribe for being above it all.

Janette Shelton
Milwaukee, WI

After holding my breath, waiting for meaningful hip hop to come back, I can finally exhale with the reinstatement of the Native Tongues. Unfortunately, hip hop culture is in a state of emergency because important issues that affect us are being ignored. Today, lyrical assassins are shooting blanks and fake gangsta joints are polluting hip hop. Hopefully, the Native Tongues will change all that.

Ronald Phillips
Elizabeth, NJ

The reinstatement of the Native Tongues is exactly what our teenagers need. Unfortunately, they can't count on their schools to educate them, and most of them don't come from strong two-parent homes. The Native Tongue brothers see the importance of addressing serious issues plaguing the black community. Their lyrics are more powerful than any gun or drug, and it's about time they get their due respect!

Nicole Catrina Springer
Hookseh, NH

HIP HOP'S IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY. IMPORTANT ISSUES ARE BEING IGNORED AND LYRICAL ASSASSINS ARE SHOOTING BLANKS. HOPEFULLY, THE NATIVE TONGUES WILL CHANGE ALL THAT.

DOUBLE DUTCH BUS

An otherwise fine article about double Dutch ["Hip Hop Ya Don't Stop" by Karen R. Good, August] was marred by the assertion that the sport was introduced to America by the Dutch. This nonsense has been repeated so often that even people intimately involved with the sport (the ones who should know better) are starting to believe the lie. Double Dutch is an exclusively African-American art form. "Dutch" is slang for "trouble" or "jeopardy," and when there are two ropes turning in opposite directions the jumper is in double *jeopardy*. Holland has nothing to do with it. In the future, people should refer to the sport as African-American rope jumping to insure that yet another one of our indigenous black art forms is not claimed by white Europeans.

Geoffrey Banks
Cincinnati, OH

I was pleased after reading your double Dutch story because the art is finally being recognized as a sport. As someone who used to jump rope, I believe it's very important for people interested in starting their own teams to learn who to contact for the necessary and correct information.

La-Toya S. Gomez
Brooklyn, NY

AIDS: WHO CARES?

I was delighted to read so much information about the No. 1 killer in the black community ["Blood and Money" by Stuart Timmons, August]. As an imprisoned victim of the deadly AIDS virus, I wish more magazines would try to educate the black community about protecting ourselves.

Terry Fluker
Garden City, GA

I am 15 years old, and this article educated me more on AIDS and HIV than any adult ever did. I'm a sexually active person who has been at risk, and I see how easy it is for people my age to contract it. I'm glad someone got their information correct and published it without blaming it on a race, or gays and bisexuals. Keep up the good work.

R.M.
Las Vegas, NV

I'd like to give mad thanks for the article on the effects AIDS has had on urban communities. Prior to Eazy-E's death, AIDS and HIV were not discussed in the Hip Hop Nation. Whenever AIDS was the rare topic of conversation, heads wanted to believe that only the "Ho Happy Jackies" on the block were the ones at risk. The fact is AIDS does not discriminate. And to all my peeps in this wonderful nation we call hip hop, I have two words: *Be smart!*

Shaft One
Portage, WI

ME'SHELL, MA BELLE

Thank you for that much needed, though far too short, story on Me'Shell Ndegé-Ocello [Clip by Lynell George, August]. She is truly an innovator in an environment of gangsta poseurs and mass-produced pop divas. If being real means interpreting how you feel in an original way and not simply following a standard set by someone else, then she is *truly* keeping it real. If being a diva means creating your own path and product, rather than simply being the product, then she is that too. Me'Shell is fine and her music is pure funk. She can be political without preaching and sexual without being obscene. There is no

YOUR BEST SHOT — MICAH R. LIGHTNER, TAMPA, FLA.

Lorraine Johnson heard from her daughter in Detroit EVERY DAY this week, but they haven't SPOKEN in days.

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one else like her.

H.A.
Miami, FL

LOST AND FOUND
The story on the Lost Boyz [Clip by Marcus Reeves, August] was the *bomb!* It was really informative; they deserve all of the attention they get. After singles like "Lifestyles," "Jeeps, Lex Coups, Bimaz & Benz," and "Renee," I'm sure these brothers are going to be around for a long while.

Kevin Williams
Manning, SC

GET MONEY
"CrazySexyBroke" [Start, by Joseph V. Tirella, August] illuminates a very important issue that our artists continue to ignore. No matter how talented you are, it's still all about paying attention to business first. Some artists continue to live beyond their means. Attorney L. Londell McMillan, who's quoted in the story, has it wrong. Paying artists more will not necessarily ensure that their debts will not exceed their income. Only good business sense and self discipline will!

Frank Staley
San Francisco, CA

DEATH OF A LEGEND
I was deeply saddened by the news that bassist Bernard Edwards passed away in April [Start, by Omoronke Idowu, August]. I am probably the X Generation's biggest "Chic freak," and always wondered what became of Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards, the songwriting team that inspired producers such as L.A. and Babyface, and Jam and Lewis. Edwards's death is certainly a loss to the music world, and I greatly appreciate your printing the news for those of us who care.

Nicole Whitmore
Bolivar, TN

EAST COAST, WEST COAST
I think the story about the Rap Summit [Start, by OJ Lima, August] explains one of the reasons why some MCs and hip hop listeners believe the West Coast doesn't have any real love for the music. Suge Knight said, "Death Row sells volumes—so how could Puffy be a threat to me?" Easy—by making music that fans can feel. Should we be expected to compromise the art form and the evolution of hip hop for money?

Aamir El Amin
Philadelphia, PA

What the hell is wrong with Puffy Combs? He's always talking about how he'd like to resolve his differences with Suge Knight—even going as far as taking out a full-page ad in your magazine to voice his concern about the issue—but when it's time for him to sit down and talk to Suge man-to-man, he's a no-show! Puffy is really living up to his name—a puff of empty hot air.

Kessa Cockrell
Ethelsville, AL

NUMBERED SOUL
Thank you for the piece you did on the new Bad Boy group 112 [Next, by Ipeleng Kgositsile, August]. I found it very informative, and I love their debut single, "Only You." Much applause to Puffy Combs for signing these four talented, attractive young men. I hope to hear more from them in the near future.

Catherine Whitfield
Detroit, MI

ACROSS THE BORDER
I didn't realize how hard illegal aliens have it until I read the article about Diana ["Green Card Blues" by Farai Chideya, Get Up On It, August]. Even though I work with Mexicans who are here illegally, I can't get used to the idea that they don't have the same privileges that I take for granted. It's a shame that they can't even go to the police to report a crime without fear of being deported. That's not what this country is supposed to stand for.

Kyle Moe
Newark, NJ

This country was built by immigrants, and immigrants keep it running. If all this is about being a "real American," then sorry, honey, but there's no such thing. The people who supposedly "founded" this country in the first place weren't born here, so how can they expect everyone who lives here now to be? How can America flaunt itself as the land of opportunity and not allow someone from another country to live here at the same time?

Amanda Cumbow
Stanwood, Washington

WORLD AMBASSADOR
Bönz Malone's story of his trip to Italy ["World Tour: La Dolce B-zo," Stix & Stönz, June/July and August] touched my heart. I deeply appreciate him sharing his experiences with us because I've found that brothers and sisters tend to erroneously believe that where they are is all there is. Your article challenges our limited concepts of the world by explaining another culture in a language we can understand and relate to.

As a history teacher, I hope to be able to open up the world to my students and help them realize how vibrant and beautiful it can be. The

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Louise Wilson
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poetry with her relatives
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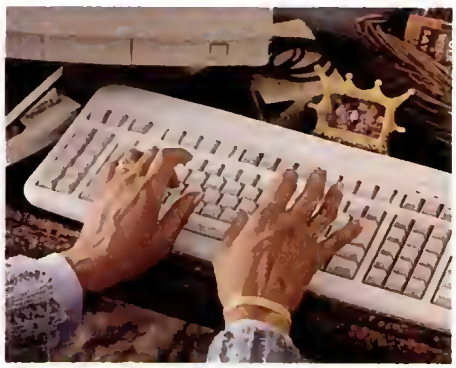
uttering a word.



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truthfulness of this piece, I believe, reached more people than any history or English book ever could.

Upenda Johnson
Baltimore, MD

B-zo's article really made sense to me and made me think deeply about the things I want in life. Although I haven't traveled much, I wonder how things are in other states and countries. I would like to be international too, but the way things are going down here, I'm just another street nigga with a lot on my mind and going nowhere fast. I want to tell B-zo to keep writing, because I'm supersure that I'm not the only one who agrees that your articles contain jewels for the mind that we can use for a lifetime!

Big Nastee, a.k.a. Big God
Baltimore, MD

I was happy to read about Bönz Malone finding a new direction in life. However, it's sad that Bönz refers to himself as a "nigga." He has a long way to go before becoming righteous and completely understanding Capo's advice. The term "nigga" or "nigger" means stupid, ignorant, and lazy. Judging by his abilities as a writer, Bönz is none of those things. Therefore, I hope that Mr. Bönz Malone–not to mention all black people–will soon learn not to use such a negative word.

Tamara McDowell
Warrensville Heights, OH

FUGEE-LA

I was very glad to see the Fugees get the cover story ["Ready or Not" by Sacha Jenkins, June/July]. They are the best thing to happen to hip hop since Arrested Development! When "Killing Me Softly" comes on the radio, I want to get out of the car and dance my butt off!

Michael Brown
Connersville, IN

I really dug your article on the Fugees. Much respect to the writer and photographer [Mpozi Tolbert]. I love the fact that the Fugees are successful at creating real music that puts people like Biggie and crew in their place. If I have to listen to another misdirected black man claim *Italiano* status instead of just accepting his own black divinity, I'm going to scream!

Crystal Sparrow
Philadelphia, PA

The Fugees' incredible style was absolutely captured by this article! I think that they–and especially Lauryn Hill–have brought a new style of music to the table. What the Fugees do is better than hip hop. They should keep at it, and VIBE should keep blowing them up!

Coffé Summers
Joliet, IL

BAD GIRLS

Total, awesome? ["Like, Totally Awesome" by Michael A. Gonzales, June/July] More like Totally Untalented. Total even know they're untalented because Pam was quoted as saying she "doesn't care if people don't think they're great singers." Real talent is just too scarce these days. The record industry should tighten up their talent standards and requirements.

M. Myrick
San Fernando Valley, CA

I really like what I read about Total because it let people know that these bad girls really do have beautiful voices. Thanks for the wonderful story!

Shanelle Johnson
Bridgeport, CT

THE WORM

I think Dennis Rodman [The Vibe Q by Scott Poulson-Bryant, June/July] is a talented, free-spirited man who deserves recognition as a wonderful basketball player, a role model, and a teacher. I was brought to tears after reading what he endured. He lives his life very honestly and openly, which makes him even more beautiful.

Toni Heidelberg
Clarksville, AR

As a black man I can admire Rodman's self-determination and talents, but at the same time I can't support his attitude toward his culture. He knows what it's like to be treated like a "nigger" in America but subscribes to an extremely Eurocentric way of life. So should we look at Rodman in a favorable light because of his basketball ability, and simply ignore his social commentary?

Mo'Kelly
MORRIS@GRAMMY.COM

CORRECTIONS
- The photograph for "Crime Pays" [Get Up On It, September] is by Donna Binder/Impact Visuals.
- All lipstick for "Film Noir" [September] by Urban Decay
- Josh Tyrangiel wrote the bullet on the Goodie Mob [Start, September].

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 205 Lexington Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, N.Y. 10016. Or send E-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.

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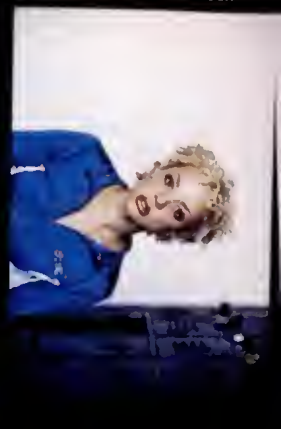

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Watching Channel Zero

SHUFFLIN' AND GRINNIN' From left: Andy (of Amo and...), J.J., Martin

Start

I love that show *Mad About You*, with Paul Reiser and Helen Hunt. Every week they get to be goofy and pseudo-cerebral, tackling life's little incidents—sharing the bathroom sink, walking the dog, staying married. On Mondays, I jump into the lives of the mega-serious, mostly white types on *Chicago Hope*. If I want television drama, I have no choice but to watch these shows, because there are none (with the exception of the rote *New York Undercover*) that focus on the lives of colored people. And there will be no new black-centered dramas or dramedies this season, either. Not one.

We have comedies, though. Martin and Gina's relationship was cool—until it got coonish—and *Living Single* perks along. America adores this laugh-packed hour. *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* is over, but *Parent 'Hood*, *Moesha*, and *Family Matters* hold down the slapstick fort while Will Smith is off saving the world. For African-Americans on TV, it's giggle giggle, guffaw guffaw. Or the coveted Costarring Role in a Dramatic or Comedy Ensemble. But knotty, big-time roles? They don't exist.

You know all this, though. TV is not famous for depth, but its dramas succeed when they zero in on a broad element of truth (*The X-Files*) or stand for a distinct way of being (*thirtysomething*). White role players engage us by translating the ways of the world—but black peoples' translations are an act mainstream Americans apparently do not buy.

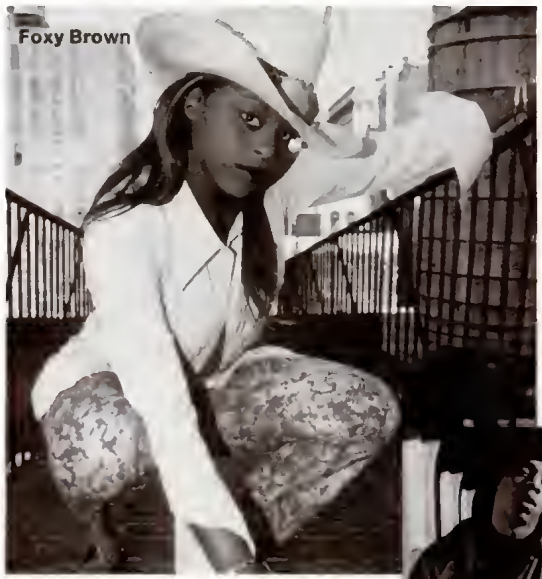
Black Entertainment Television, where are you? Not broadcasting the excellent-but-canceled *South Central* or *Frank's Place*. Those African-American–centered dramas struggled for network success, but weren't allowed—like *Party of Five* or *Melrose Place*—to flounder near the bottom of the ratings pool before "finding an audience." Shows like *ER* and *Law & Order* do feature vividly drawn "minority" characters, but they mainly guest-star in other people's lives.

Why? Probably because only 2.6 percent of TV *and* film writers are black. And white writers don't often see Latino, Asian, or African-American lives up close. They end up guessing, and the resulting dramas are so hollow nobody's interested. The writers rarely see black people at reunions or weddings or eating dinner in bed on a Sunday night. If they did, they would make a show about you or me, watching white folks on TV. And you haven't seen a show about that. *Danyel Smith*

It Takes Two

Rap duets get down and dirty

As rap music matures, so apparently does its subject matter. A recent spate of rap records are offering a contemporary, urban twist on a pop music staple: the male-female duet. With inspiration from '60s soul artists such as Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell, rappers are collaborating to spin tales of ghetto love and lust for a romance-starved Hip Hop Nation.



Foxy Brown

Jaÿ-Z

Though the practice of female rappers kickin' it alongside the fellas dates back to the days of the Funky Four Plus One, relationships didn't become a hot topic of dialogue between the sexes until UTFO's 1984 hit "Roxanne, Roxanne." This boy-spurned-by-girl classic inspired more than a dozen answer records and set the stage for MCs of both genders to air their differences side by side on the same piece of wax. First came MC Lyte and Positive K's 1989 "I'm Not Havin' It," which detailed Positive's fruitless attempts to pick up Lyte with the memorable opener, "Excuse me, miss...." A few years later, Ice Cube and Yo Yo took it to another level with an aggressive debate about the powers of the sexes on "It's a Man's World." Positive K revisited the form in '92 with the catchy "I Got a Man," on which he rhymed the male *and* female parts by disguising his voice electronically.

The present wave of male-female rap hits was most likely ignited by last year's summer smash "You're All I Need" by Method Man and Mary J. Blige. A remake of a Marvin/Tammi tune, the cut found a "sensitive" Method pledging love to his girl, Shorty, and proclaiming that "nothing makes a man feel better than a woman." This year, the trend was made official by two massive duet hits: "Doin It" by L.L. Cool J with LeShaun, and "Get Money" featuring the Notorious B.I.G. and Little Kim. The L.L. song is a masterful study of sexual tension and release—four minutes of foreplay over a sultry, funky beat. Biggie and Kim, meanwhile, find male-female solidarity by jointly claiming love for money, fly clothes, and unselfish sexual partners.

But no song captures the rap duet trend as well as "Ain't No Nigga," in which Jaÿ-Z and Foxy Brown articulate new rules for relationships in these player-loving times ("...Sleeps around but he gives me a lot"). With its high-livin' fantasies and groovy bass, this cut had male and female listeners on lock—until recently, when dance floors were sparked by Akinyele's raunchy "Put It in Ya Mouth," featuring vocalist Kia Jeffries. Like a yang to the yin of Method and Mary, the record extols the virtues of oral sex in lurid detail: "I was sprung / Once I feel your tongue..." declares the saucy young vixen before giving *explicit* instructions on where to lick. At this rate, it looks like '97 is gonna be less about keeping it real and more about keeping it up.

Jon Shecter

start

Ask the Rap Bandit

Everything you always wanted to know about hip hop but were afraid to ask

Q: Who has been hip hop's most influential person during the past few years? D.R., SEATTLE, WA

A: MC Phil E. Blunt.

Q: What can we do to stop the burning of our churches? B.R., PHOENIX, AZ

A: Keep a closer watch on Left Eye.

Q: Will Chuck D and his new label Slam Jamz be able to rescue hip hop from gangsta and booty obsession and return it to pro-black consciousness? C.E., BUFFALO, NY

A: While I have the utmost respect for Chuck D, that task will have to be left up to someone with more street credibility—like Brian Austin Green.

Q: What do you think will be the outcome of LeShaun's sexual discrimination/breach of contract suit against L.L. Cool J? D.S., LOS ANGELES, CA

A: L.L. and LeShaun will marry and have a baby, 'cause mama said knock you up.

Q: I was glad to see rappers like Mike D, Tribe, Biz, De La, and the Fugees donate their time and talent to help the long-suffering people of Tibet. What did you do? J.M., PROSPECT PARK, NJ

A: I donated a dope jacket sent to me by Tommy Boy. It's a little too big on me, but if used as a tent, it could provide adequate shelter for a small Tibetan village.

Q: I've been waiting in line for the Flavor Flav solo album for a long time. I really have to go to the bathroom. Should I risk losing my place in line or stick it out a bit longer? M.T., BOSTON, MA

A: If it's that important to you, stick it out. Hell, I shit my pants one time waiting on a refund for Chronic Tour tickets.

Got a question about hip hop? Hit me off at: The Rap Bandit, P.O. Box 48382, Philadelphia, PA 19144, or rapbandit@vibe.com.

bullets point-blank news

READ ALL ABOUT IT

Donald L. Miller, a former Dow Jones VP, grew tired of reading newspapers without a black viewpoint—so he started his own. *Our World News*, a Baltimore-based weekly, will cover "general interest news for, not necessarily about, the black community," says Miller. The paper will be distributed nationally, and Miller expects circulation to reach 350,000 within five years. "There's a black perspective to reporting that's not being addressed by mainstream media," says Miller. The inaugural issue will be on newsstands by the end of the year.

BACK IN VOGUE

En Vogue weren't kidding about not breaking up: After a four-year hiatus, the quartet recorded "Don't Let Go (Love)" for the *Set It Off* soundtrack and are now selecting songs for a new album, due in 1997. Denzil Foster and Thomas McElroy—En Vogue's longtime Svengalis—won't produce all the tracks, making this the first time the group will work with other producers. "We're [considering] Organized Noize, Deee-Lite, and R. Kelly," says Terry Ellis. "We're excited to get back to work."

Llaughs & Mo Laughs!

LL Cool J

In the House

Mondays 8/7

Brandy is

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start

Freaky Deaky

Tupac teams with porn stars in explicit music video

JEFFERY NEWBURY

As if criminal charges, attempts on his life, bicoastal hip hop conflicts, and a quintuple-platinum album aren't enough, Tupac Shakur is once again making headlines with the music video for his No. 1 Rap single "How Do U Want It?" Directed by the adult film world's notorious Ron Hightower, the video is an unprecedented convergence of high-profile porn stars and hip hoppers.

"The video is not just thrown at you," says Hightower, director of such X-rated movies as *Kink World* and *Vivid Raw Three*. "As hard as it may be, I personally feel it was done with taste."

While it avoids the juvenile rump shaking favored in countless rap clips past, "How Do U Want It?" isn't exactly fit for the casual VH1 viewer. Pairing Tupac and Jodeci's K-Ci and JoJo (who both guest on the song) with erotic film luminaries Heather Hunter, Nina Hartley, and others, the video is stuffed with titillating imagery: Tupac and Hunter sharing a straddle on the saddle of a mechanical bull; go-go–caged naked women engaging in oral favors; and most memorably, a hot-tub sequence in which champagne is poured down the bare torso and crotch of a fetching young woman, right into the wine glass of a thirsty K-Ci.

An alternate, nudity-free version of "How Do U Want It?" was already one of MTV's most requested videos at press time, while the adult version premieres September 14 on the Playboy Channel's *Hot Rocks: Back to School* music video program. Big butt advocate Sir Mix-A-Lot will be hosting the show.

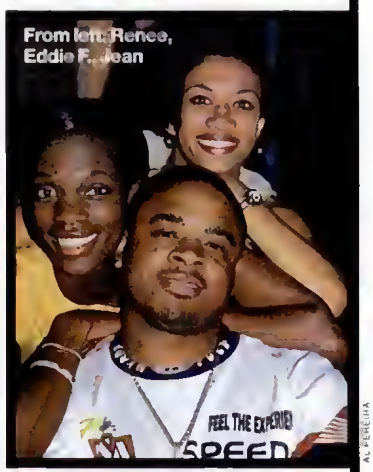
There have been other rappers who've done explicit music videos: Luke, Sir Mix, and most recently, DJ Polo, whose "Freak of the Week" video features John Wayne Bobbitt and porn legend Ron Jeremy. But "How Do U Want It?" manages to be racier and more glamorous than any of these. "Not to sound conceited, but I don't think [anyone else] came with the amount of class that we did," says Hightower. "I definitely see this video creating its own chapter for others to follow." C. DeLores oughta love that.

Chairman Mao

Studio Time

In the lab with Zhané

The two women known as Zhané are crowded around a mike in the vocal booth of Manhattan's Sound Tracks studio, laying down lyrics for "Just Like That." Producer Eddie F. cut the rough track a couple of months before Zhané—Jean Norris and Renee Neaufville—began working on their untitled second album (due in late October), but the sisters are just getting their vocal parts straight now. "Eddie called me at 11 last night to tell me we were recording today," Renee sighs, going back to her Quill notebook to scribble some fresh ideas.



From left: Renee, Eddie F., Jean

AL PERELHA

Eddie F., who's also one of the A&R men for the project, is expected at any moment. "He still hasn't heard what we've done to his track," says Jean. When Eddie walks into the room, he gets down to work. "To me, this is a feel-good song," he says, nodding approvingly to the lyrically enhanced track. "That's why I used this equipment—an MPC 3000 drum machine, a K200 keyboard, and a Trinity Korg keyboard—for that warm kind of sound."

"With this album, we're just fine-tuning what we did on our first record," says Renee. "We're older and more experienced, so we're reflecting on our lives without alienating our audience."

In addition to writing much of the album, Zhané also produced five tracks, including "Rendevouz" and "Confusion." "It's good to see them go into the studio and get the sounds they want," says Naughty by Nature's Kay Gee, who has been the duo's mentor and main producer since their self-titled 1994 debut. "Now," he jokes, "all they have to do is learn how to mix."

Michael A. Gonzales

MILESTONE COMICS

Super Boyz

It's not a bird. It sure ain't a plane. Hell, it's not even Superman, but it is the Lost Boyz. That's right, in *Static* #40, the hardcore Queens-based Boyz team up with Milestone Comics superheroes Static and Icon to battle a supervillain named Boom Box who crashes the quartet's concert. It seems Boom Box is a little heated because the rappers dissed his "maaad whack" rhymes ("I been living in the city / My life ain't pretty / Some fellas can't hang 'cuz my rap is witty").

According to Milestone's Christine N. Gilliam, the black-owned and -operated company hopes to include four rap artists per year in its line of 10 different comics. Bahamadia and Busta Rhymes are tentatively slated to appear next. The company also plans to launch a new monthly title based on rappers' life stories. "Maybe we'll even give them superpowers and a costume," muses Gilliam. Tupac and Biggie with superhuman skills? It could get ugly.

Joseph V. Tirella

bullets point-blank news

MICHAEL CARTLAND

A MODEL ATHLETE

Lisa Leslie, the star center of the U.S. women's Olympic basketball team, is everywhere lately: on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* and *TV Guide*, modeling in *Vogue*, and endorsing Nike on TV. Leslie's been in such demand that she just signed with Wilhelmina Models (home of Beverly Johnson) to manage her off-court career. Natasha Esch, president and owner of Wilhelmina, says, "We expect her to be as big a success in modeling as in basketball."

THE LAST LAUGH

It sounds like a joke: How many cops does it take to make Belvedere, Calif. dole out $90,000? Answer: Two, plus one clerk. Three city employees protested to racist, sexist, and homophobic O.J. Simpson jokes that were posted on a police bulletin board. When the trio complained to police chief Glenn Accomero, they claim he reacted inappropriately to their grievance and created a "hostile work environment"; they subsequently filed suit. The city denied wrongdoing but agreed to settle to avoid litigation. Accomero apologized and has taken a leave of absence.

Motown Tragedy

Diana Ross's brother is murdered

On June 22, police officers discovered the decomposing bodies of Arthur "T-Boy" Ross—songwriter and brother of Motown superstar Diana Ross—and his wife of 10 months, Patricia Ann Robinson, in the basement of a suburban Detroit home. Authorities said the cause of death was suffocation, and estimated the two had been dead at least two weeks. At press time, police had not named any suspects but were questioning Ricky Vernon Brooks and Regina Smith, the couple who rented the house where the murders took place.

Diana Ross released a statement that said, "I am shocked and devastated by the loss of my brother, Arthur. I loved him very much." Back in the day, Diana helped Arthur get a job as a songwriter at Motown, where he penned songs for Marvin Gaye and later released a solo album. According to local reports, however, Arthur and Diana's relationship had soured. Friends said that Arthur felt overshadowed by the success of his older sister.

Arthur "T-Boy" Ross

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Though Ross, 47, was receiving royalties for some of his work, he hadn't done much musically for years and was struggling with a long-running drug problem. He was due to appear in a Detroit court on June 26—four days after he was found dead—to face felony charges related to a November 1995 traffic stop during which cops found a loaded 9 mm, marijuana, heroin, and cocaine in his car. Police would not comment on whether drugs had anything to do with his death.

Friends acknowledged Ross's history of drug abuse, but said that he was trying to go straight and refocus on music. "I was in the studio with T-Boy three weeks before he disappeared," said Kenny Green, a longtime friend and musical colleague. "He looked healthy, like his old self. I don't know what this could've been all about."

Roy Monroe, a family friend and pallbearer at Ross's funeral, was equally perplexed. "It just doesn't make any sense," he said. "T-Boy didn't have an enemy in the world. Not that I knew of. The whole thing is a mystery."

Khary Kimani Turner

YO, YoYo

Advice from an intelligent black woman

I am a 21-year-old black woman married to a 24-year-old black man. We're both in the military. We have an 18-month-old girl and one on the way. But the problem between us is a matter of trust. After being stationed elsewhere for a year and returning home, I believe I walked in on an affair. One day, I came home early to find a woman in my house. Even though she and my husband were fully dressed and he swears there's "nothing to worry about," I believe otherwise. We've been to counseling, but our relationship is strained. He says he loves me, but I don't believe he was ready to settle down. I think he just did so for our child's sake. I love my husband, but I'm at my wit's end and don't know what to do anymore.

DESPERATELY IN NEED OF HELP
ATLANTA, GA

Dear Desperately in Need:

Girlfriend, if you feel in your heart that your husband is cheating, guess what? Nine times out of 10, he probably is. I don't wanna be so quick to say "Leave your man," but confront the situation and let him know he's gotta poop or get off the pot. Whatever he had going while you were away is now over. Mama's home now, with fresh bread in the oven. If you really do love him, then I think you should try to work it out. Don't get me wrong: Don't ever be a fool for a man, but in relationships you'll sometimes go through the ringer once or twice when various situations arise. It's up to you to decide what's worth fighting for, and whether your love is a forgiving kind.

I've been in and out of jobs with a temp service, but lately no one will hire me. I lost all my friends because I don't have any money to do anything. I've also lost my self-esteem, pride, and dignity because of the rejection from employers. It's getting so bad I ripped all posters, certificates, and diplomas from my bedroom walls because I don't feel worthy of them. I tried to commit suicide because the depression of being unemployed and friendless is really hurting inside. I feel so lonely and ashamed I want to die.

N.M.
DETROIT, MI

Dear N.M.:

If you're feeling like nothing is working for you, seek counseling. You need someone to talk to in order to work out your self-esteem issues, because unemployment is only part of the problem. Being a true believer in Christ, when all else fails for me, I turn to the Lord. If you belong to a congregation, maybe you'd feel comfortable talking to your priest, reverend, or pastor about your problems. And being "temporarily" friendless shouldn't depress you—friends sometimes come and go, but true friends stick by you no matter what. (Once you begin putting out a healthier attitude about yourself, people will gravitate to you.) Also, maybe being jobless in Michigan is your calling to relocate. So keep trying, because there are many solutions. But never give up on life.

Need some intelligent advice?
Write to: YO, YO YO, c/o VIBE, 205 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.
Please include return address and telephone number.

bullets point-blank news

NEW DIAPER GENERATION

In honor of their little bundle of joy expected in November, newlyweds ☥ and Mayte have developed a series of multimedia children's bedtime stories. Each package will contain a colorfully illustrated book (featuring multiracial characters), a read-along cassette, and a CD with music inspired by the story. ☥ narrates the tapes while Mrs. ☥ sings many of the songs—including some in German and Spanish. While the project is still untitled, the first story, "Happy Tears," will be released in time for Christmas.

PHOTO: CBS

A-TEAM B-LIST

Following the success of *Mission: Impossible*, '80s action series *The A-Team* will be kicking onto big screens in the summer of '98. But don't hold your breath waiting for Mr. T. Producer Stephen J. Cannell and Universal Pictures plan to revamp the old NBC series, which followed the exploits of crime-fighting Vietnam vets on the lam from the government. "We'll try to find parts for members of the series," Cannell said. "But basically, we're going to recast with other people." We pity the fool who plays B.A. Baracus.

start

Lady Loathes Cool J

LeShaun and L.L. settle sex discrimination dispute

L.L.

You wouldn't know it from listening to L.L. Cool J's Top 10 hit "Doin It," but LeShaun Toreau Williams, who contributed the steamy female vocals to the song, has major beef with L.L. On June 26, Williams filed a sexual discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and threatened to sue the rapper for breach of contract after he withdrew his offer for her to appear in the song's video and join him on tour.

When L.L. remade LeShaun's 1988 underground hit "Wild Thang" (with the chorus "Doin' it, and doin' it, and doin' it well"), the then seven-months-pregnant LeShaun reprised her vocals. But when the time came time to shoot the video two months later, she was replaced with a bevy of beauties.

LeShaun

Then, two weeks after her daughter was born, and with "Doin It" rising on the charts, LeShaun was set to join L.L. on tour. At his request, she flew to Panama City, Fla. for a pre-tour gig on MTV's *The Grind*, but upon arrival found she'd been replaced by L.L.'s slimmer choreographer, who ended up lip-synching LeShaun's parts. "L.L. told me that I was overweight," says LeShaun. "He touched my stomach and said, 'Niggas ain't checking for that. It's L.L. It's "Doin It." It's got to be hot.'"

L.L. told MTV News that he was just looking out for LeShaun's future: "If I had put that girl on television like that, I think in the long run she would have come to me and said, 'Why did you let me do that?'" LeShaun disagrees: "Who the hell does he think he is, God? And what makes his opinion the opinion of every man, let alone mine?"

While waiting for the EEOC to review her complaint, LeShaun hired attorneys to prepare a lawsuit against L.L. She also organized a protest outside L.L.'s July 25 concert at Radio City Music Hall. But on the day of the show, lawyers for L.L. and LeShaun reached a last-minute settlement. "I'm glad to put it behind me and get on with my life," says LeShaun, who is barred from speaking about the settlement's terms. "All I can say is, we had a disagreement, and it was settled amicably."

Josh Tyrangiel

Sound Check

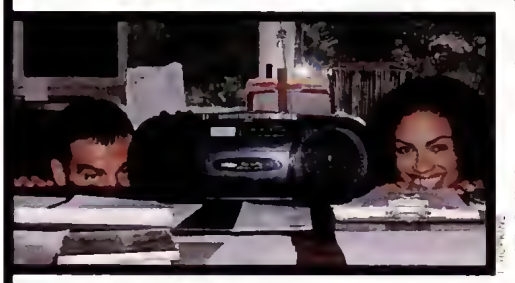
Bobbito Garcia plays the tracks, Amel Larrieux states the facts

When Amel Larrieux of Groove Theory told me she reads Sound Check on the regular and always hoped to get a turn to "state the facts," I was ecstatic. Dialogue is always better when there is mutual admiration—and Groove Theory's hit single "Tell Me" is my favorite R&B song of the '90s. Respect was due when I saw her perform it live with partner Bryce Wilson in New York City and she freaked her vocals; more so when she told me she writes her own lyrics.

• **Bobbito's answering-machine rendition of Todd Rundgren's "Hello It's Me"**

A: Hee, hee, hee! [*Listens more closely*] What!? I don't know what you're saying.

B: I'll sing it: "'Cause I never want to make you change for me...."



A: Oh, that's Todd Rundgren. I would have never known from the way you sang it. Um, not to say you don't sing well.

B: Don't worry, it's cool.

A: It's not one of my favorite Isley songs, or Todd's songs, or even one from my own album. It was suggested for me to cover.

B: If you do a remix, I'll sing backup.

A: Okay. We'll sell a million records!

• **ELLA FITZGERALD—"Summertime"**

A: Ella was the bomb. I crafted my voice after hers. But I realized what she did; her voice actually *became* an instrument. You lose that when you lose live instrumentation. [The vocals] shouldn't be on top of a track, but intertwined with the instruments. When I realized Ella is who I should be learning from, I had an easier time finding my voice. I'm still searching, but she's my reference.

B: Were you affected by her death?

A: You would think she died a long time ago, considering the way the industry ignores music that's not mainstream. But she'll live forever—I'll never stop listening to her. Jazz is the exotic fruit. It'd be beneficial if more people were exposed to it.

• **MARY JANE GIRLS—"All Night Long"**

A: Okay, what are you trying to say? That song is like a bad nightmare for me. When I wrote the original "Tell Me" for Trey Lorenz, Bryce had a completely different track. I think Bryce flipped it [when he used a sample from "All Night"]—that's what people should do if they're sampling—but "Tell Me" isn't even close to being one of my favorite songs that I've written. It doesn't represent me. I used to love "All Night," but I'm so sick of "Tell Me" I can't even hear it.

B: Have you performed it too much?

A: It's just too bubblegum.

B: I like that joint!

A: It was the last song we added to the album. I'm surprised it did so well.

• **OASIS—"Don't Look Back in Anger"**

A: I know this already. My daughter sings every Oasis song. They remind me of the Beatles. I'm a huge Beatles fan.

B: I didn't think you would like it.

A: Nah, I'm like you, I listen to everything. I listen to alternative stations sometimes to get away from current R&B.

• **SADAT X—"The Lump Lump"**

A: I love Sadat's voice. Put it louder, I haven't heard this yet.

B: You haven't heard this?

A: No. But he sampled something from "Tell Me" on one of the songs.

B: [*Sarcastically*] I wonder which one?

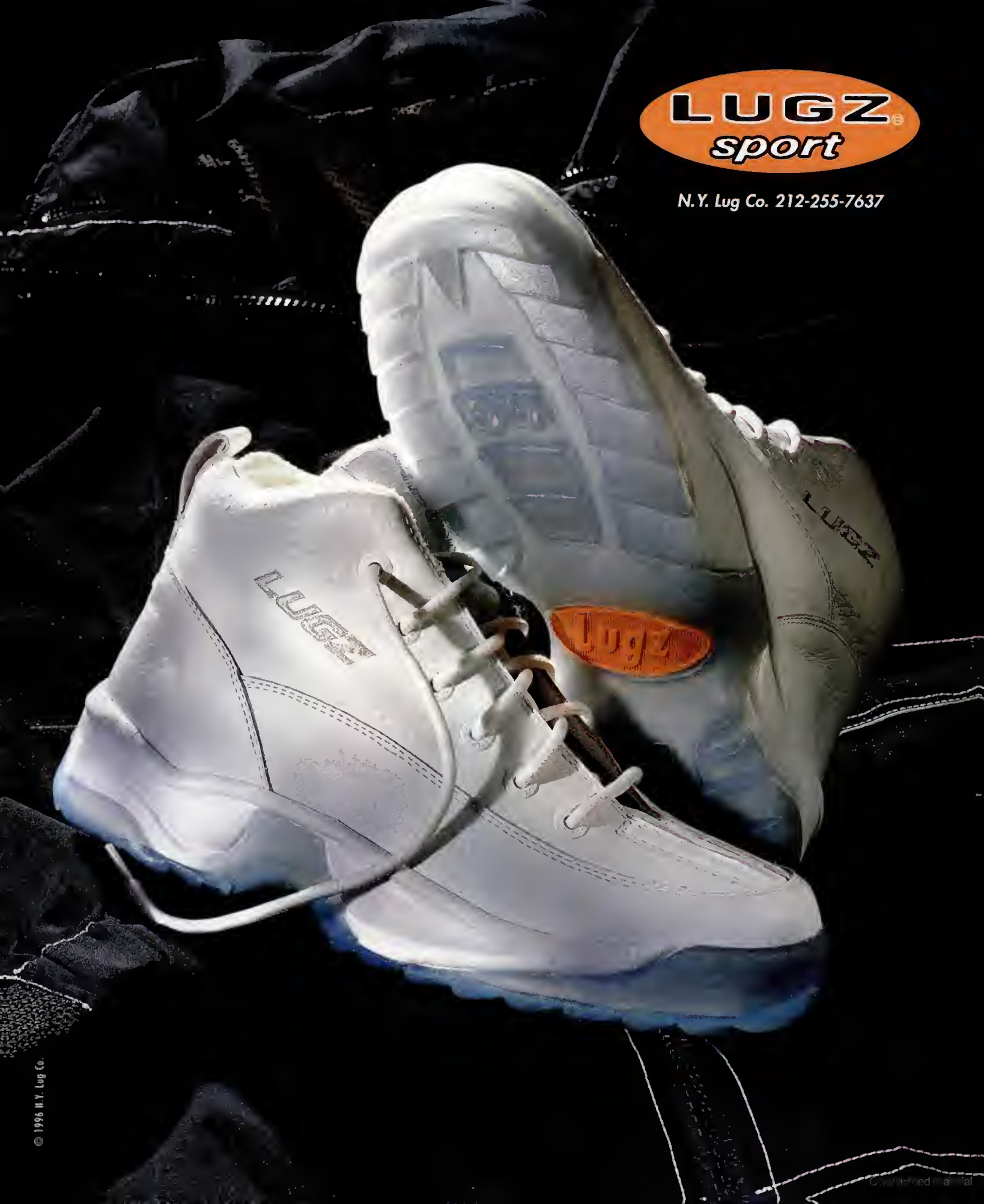
A: Is this it?!? Boo you! You played me. [*Listening more intently*] I love his style. Brand Nubian's *One for All* is one of the best hip hop albums ever. [*The chorus with her singing comes on*] I want to crawl under the desk. Turn it off. Embarrassing.

Etc....Etc....Etc....

Dr. Dre

The debut album on Dr. Dre's new label, Aftermath Entertainment, will be released in mid-September. It will be a posse compilation featuring various artists including Nas, KRS-One, King Tee and B-Real....Knowledge from Digable Planets has formed a record label, U.K. Entertainment & Recording Ltd., with Nigerian rapper UGO. Knowledge's solo effort, due in early 1997, will be the label's first release....The Pharcyde's world tour—which began in November 1995—was interrupted in June when Slim Kid Tre was detained in a Japanese jail for three weeks after being caught with bullets in his luggage; the tour resumed after his release....South Florida booty rap fans will want to catch Peep Diss Videos, a 30-minute weekly show playing T&A videos; the program's producers hope to broadcast throughout the South within a year....According to the New York *Daily News*, the reason Jason Kidd and Jimmy Jackson of the Dallas Mavericks can't get along is Toni Braxton. The paper alleges that Jackson stole the R&B sexpot away from Kidd. But Kidd told VIBE, "Our problems are basketball-related. It's nothing personal. I've never dated Toni."...UPDATE: After more than 24,000 women auditioned, the role of Selena in the forthcoming biopic on the late singer went to Jennifer Lopez (*Mi Familia*, *Money Train*).

Bullets by Omoronke Idowu, OJ Lima, and Joseph V. Tirella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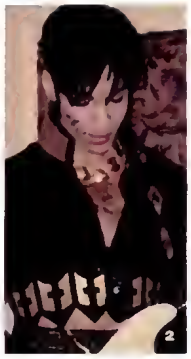
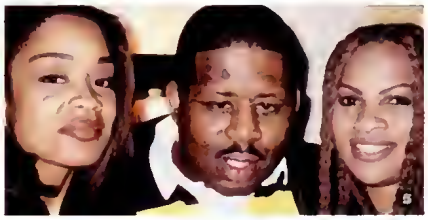
In the MIX You Don't Stop

start

1. Thousands of hip hop fans came to Harlem to see the Fugees, Wu-Tang Clan, and Goodie MoB perform at Hoodshock, a free concert to encourage voter registration. But why did somebody have to ruin it by busting shots? 2. What's-his-symbol blesses an unsuspecting crowd at New York's Chaz & Wilson's nightclub with an impromptu jam. 3. Reggae songstress Lady Saw can't control herself during a recent performance at a Manhattan Sam Goody record store. Hey, when you got an itch, you better scratch! 4. The microphone fiend himself, Rakim, is back and sounding better than ever, as the crowd at N.Y.C.'s Mirage discovered. 5. With the competition for Treach safely behind them, maybe O.J.'s daughter, Arnell Simpson, and Pepa have set their sights on Grand Puba, who looks all shook up. 6. L.L. Cool J and Shaunta are "Doin It" real freaky-like during Mr. Smith's stage show. What's she got that LeShaun doesn't? 7. The sight of James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, hugging Tony Bennett, the Godfather...well, that's *amore*! 8. At New York's Beacon Theatre performance of *Your Arms Too Short to Box With God*, featured performers Stephanie Mills, Teddy Pendergrass, and BeBe Winans receive a standing ovation for their heavenly performances. 9. Suge must have let his Dogg out to play, 'cause Snoop is really gettin' his groove on at Too Short's retirement party in L.A. 10. Is that Nia Long busting out of that halter top? Guess that good-girl image is long gone. 11. Mary J. Blige and Kool DJ Red Alert pretend like they're having fun at the ASCAP awards in N.Y.C. 12. You'd be smiling like that too if your paycheck looked like the ones Arnold Schwarzenegger and Vanessa Williams got for *Eraser*. 13. N'Dea Davenport (formerly of the Brand New Heavies) has been singing backup on Natalie Merchant's (formerly of 10,000 Maniacs) U.S. tour, and their Houston performance left the audience wanting more. 14. Dennis Rodman, shown at his party celebrating the Bulls' fourth NBA championship, should win the Freak of the Month award—just because he's, well, Dennis Rodman.

Shani Saxon





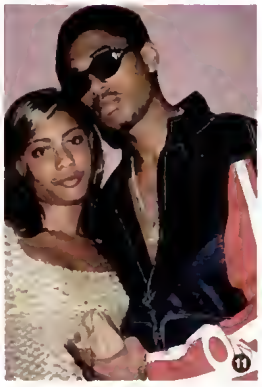
JUST ADD BACARDI

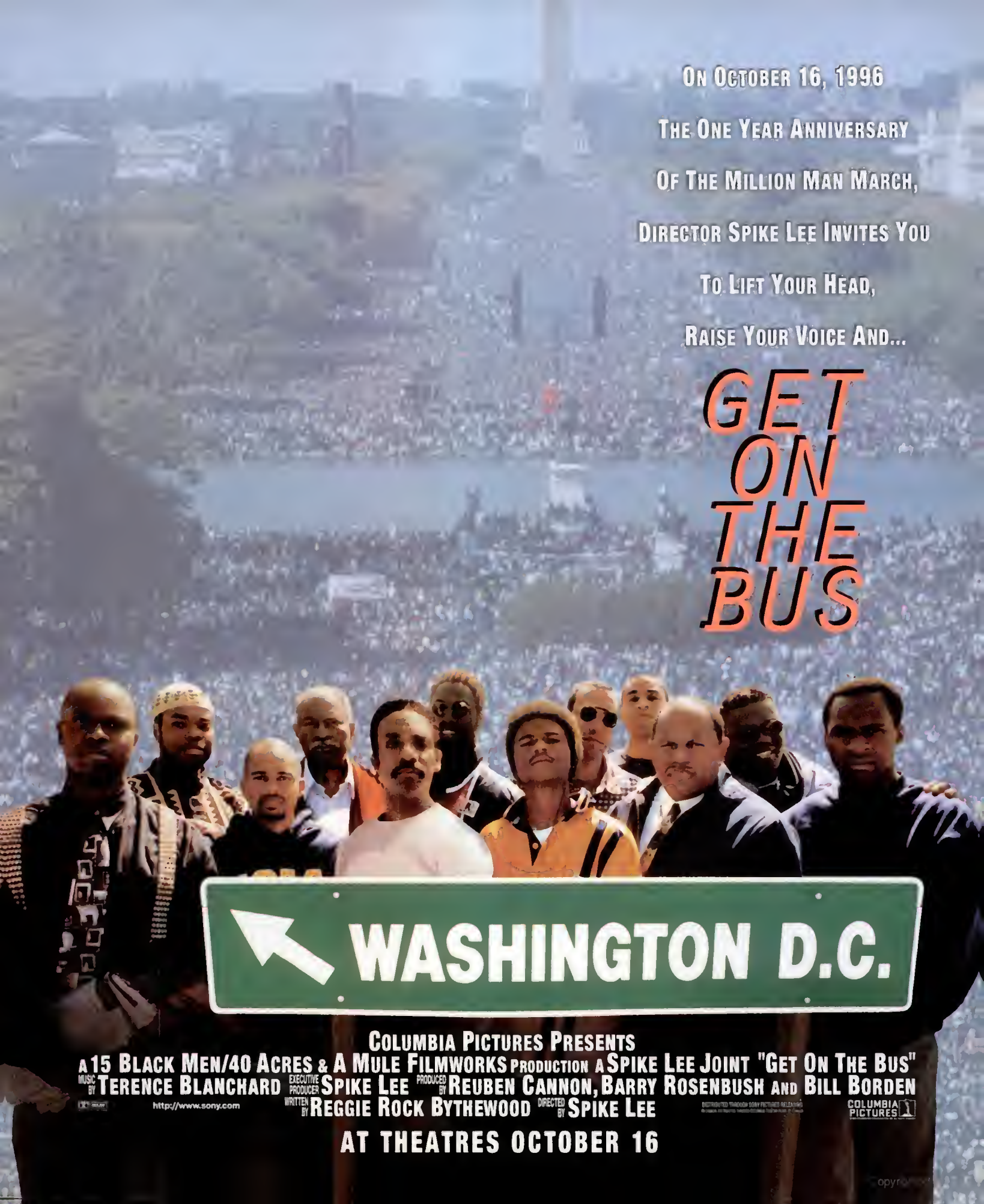
start

In the MIX Too

Here's TWO You

isn't it all so romantic? 1. There's Jada and Will rushing off the set of *Men in Black* in N.Y.C.'s SoHo, probably to set things off back at the hotel. 2. The best place to find out who's dating whom has always been movie premieres, and the L.A. opening of Eddie Murphy's *Nutty Professor* was no exception....Kadeem Hardison has graduated from *A Different World*, but it's the Dwayne Wayne in him that keeps longtime girlfriend/singer Chanté Moore wanting more. (3.) Judging by their smiling faces, actress Holly Robinson and her husband, Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Rodney Peete, knew from jump street that they belonged together. (4.) Blair Underwood, who stars in *Set It Off*, and his wife, Desiree, also came out to support Mr. Murphy. (5.) Larenz Tate (*Dead Presidents*) and Theresa Randle (*Girl 6*) make for a pretty sexually menacing couple! (6.) Who would have thought *Martin*'s Tisha Campbell and *Above the Rim*'s Duane Martin would still look so happy after so many years? Go figure. 7. Jimmy Jam and his wife, Lisa, at the impact Convention in Nashville, are the only ones who understand that dark shades make for a really cool couple. 8. SWV's Taj better hope some sports groupie doesn't sing "You're the One" to her man, Dennis Scott of the Orlando Magic. They attended VIBE's celebrity showcase celebrating Black Music Month at Walt Disney World's Pleasure Island. (9.) Parents-to-be (and the respective heads of LaFace and Yab Yum Records) Babyface and Tracey Edmonds were at Pleasure island to witness performances by several of their artists. 10. Christopher Williams and his wife, Natalie, chill at a Downtown N.Y.C. video shoot; we're guessing that's why she's dressed like a Luke Dancer. 11. We haven't seen DeVante Swing hanging around the other Jodeci members too much lately. Is that because he's busy "Feenin' " for Ms. Arlene, shown with him at N.Y.C.'s Roseland Ballroom? 12. Apparently TLC's Left Eye and Jacksonville Jaguar Andre Rison's love is everlasting. It kinda reminds us of that Chaka Khan song "Through the Fire." *S.S.*

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Job Korps: Eyez and Earz

"Some people see things as they are and say, 'Why?'
I dream of things that never were and say, Why not?"
–Robert Kennedy

start

The following is a study in conceiving, believing, and achieving one's goals. It's intended to sharpen vision and improve hearing.

Peep this! Bob Marley once said, "Some people have plans and schemes, others have ways and means." True, indeed. It doesn't suffice to just go through life stumbling into success. James Brown said, "You got to use what you got to get what you want," but make sure you work for what you need. Most of us came into this world with eyez and earz—the best tools on earth. Some didn't, and still went on to greatness. What's your problem? Put down the trees and pick up a book.

If you want to sharpen your vision, first you've got to sharpen your mental pencil and picture yourself in the future. The kind of vision I'm talking about is knowing where you want to go in life and going the distance. That's eyez. Look at Einstein. He didn't have good grades in school, but he had vision. He knew how his gifts could do the most good for mankind. He also knew that other people could blow up off his ideas (his equations helped win the war with the invention of the atomic bomb). Einstein understood the pros and cons of his achievements, and that only comes from looking at the larger picture.

Eyez are just one gift the majority of us have. Their neighbors are the earz. They can help give you direction if you use 'em. My father and I never saw eye-to-eye much, but I can remember him telling me, "If you don't listen, you'll feel." We all want to be heard in our struggle to bring new ideas to the table. But who's there to listen to us?

Beethoven was an especially gifted child. As a lad he created some of the world's most beautiful symphonies. His conducting of a 60 to 90-piece orchestra was like leading a modern-day company. Even after Beethoven lost his hearing, he still had direction. He stuck to his artistic vision of music even though he was constantly laughed at by those of lesser talent. But the fact is the master himself, although deaf, navigated the most intricate pitch changes and variations in musical history!

Trying to do it all yourself doesn't always make you look like a hero. I'm sure Beethoven would have loved to hear his ideas orchestrated. But at least he knew that one vision and one voice leads to no achievement at all. Only when he had his team down with him was the dream attainable. It's important to involve like-minded people in your vision. Beethoven shared his musical ideas with all those who would dare to listen, helping others see the larger picture as well.

Believe it or not, I want to help you become the boss of your own operation. To help you *see* the possibilities that lie before you. Many of us hate the idea of failure. Some would rather crash and burn than admit to another living soul that they were wrong. But what happened to those childhood balls we once had? When you're a child, you will do whatever it takes to get from Point A to Plan B. We don't even need to know how to walk yet, we'll still go after whatever captures our attention. If we fall and someone laughs, so what? You can bet that we'll eventually get what we want. Nothing will stop us from achieving, because we have already conceived it and believe it. C whatimsayin'? With vision comes risk.

Sometimes, along the way, we lose hope—whether due to failure or lack of patience. But that's when a true leader relentlessly drives to the top of their mountain on a drop of hope. It's the thrill of the chase that makes the go-getter get better. As far as visions go, *"It don't mean a thing if you ain't willing to swing!"*

Understand that listening is hard work too. But it's essential to the formula. Listen to your heart for your calling. Listen to 1010 WINS for news, sports, and whatever. Listen to the balancing note that plays throughout your life. The chords are all around us. Pick the ones that will help fine-tune your direction.

And this is important: Never forget the Bounce Back basic rule. Everyone fails at something in their life—that's just reality. But failure sets the stage for success. Remember the Donald? Not so long ago, people thought Trump was a chump betting against the house. When he was walking into the Trump Plaza one day, a bum asked him for some change. "I'm broke," the bum said. "That puts you about $1 billion in front of me" was Trump's reply. Five years ago, Trump was $960 million in debt. Now, he's just about the same amount in the green! What was his secret? Vision. A real gambler never loses sight of winning, especially after a big loss.

Can you see the gap between the poor and the rich widening? Well, open your earz and hear this: The government is eliminating the middle class. Now, more than ever, focus attention on what's being said by our nation's leaders, and what moves we need to make.

Reach out with comments and questions to:

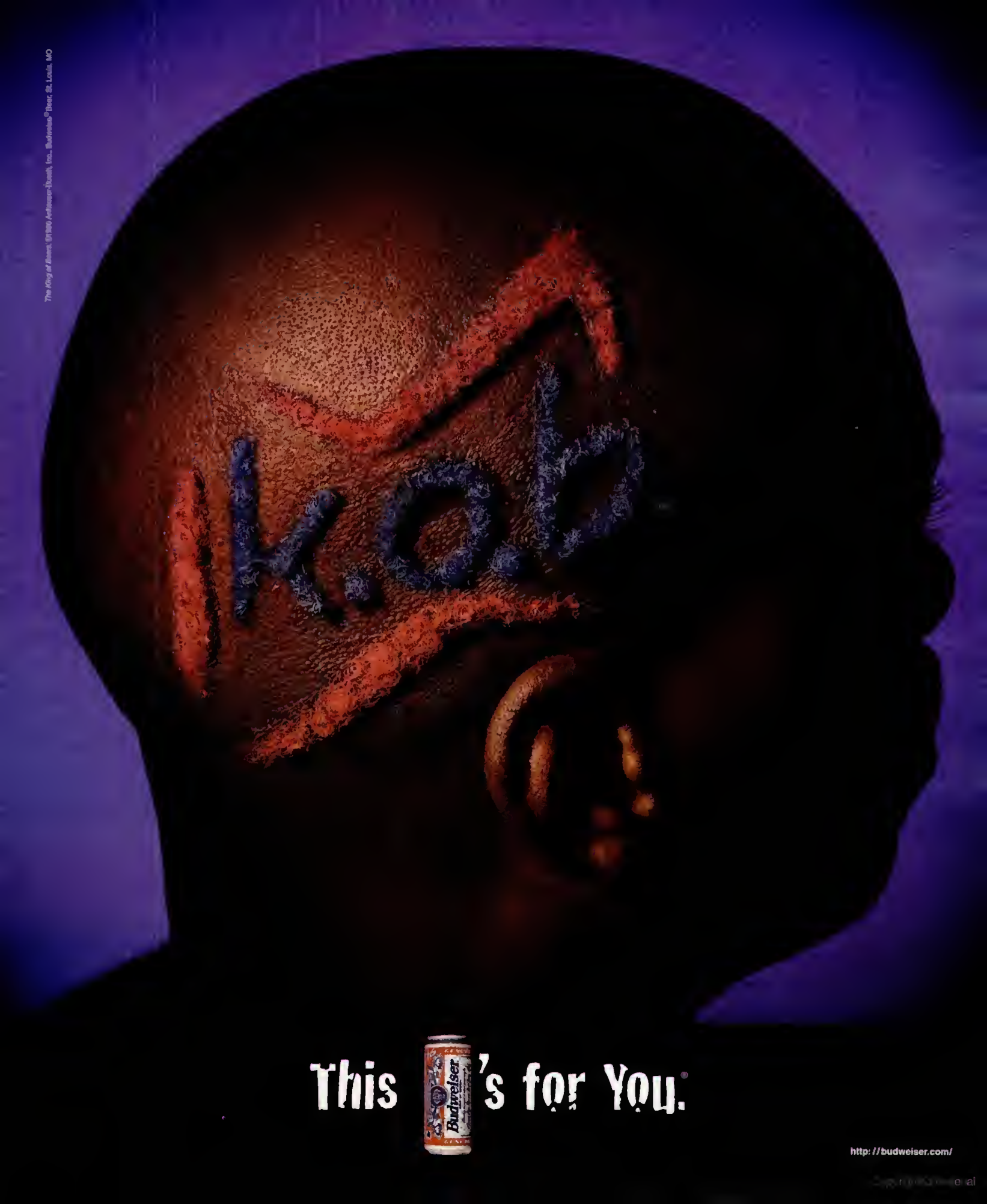
VIBE
Attention: Job Korps Station
205 Lexington Ave. Sweet #3
New York, NY 10016

Just in case you didn't know, I'm the Job Hope of the Ghetto! Get the picture? We'll see. Peep another example highlighting the importance of vision in life and business: There was once a woman who lived at home with her only child. Each morning, she'd go to the kitchen, make her coffee, and stare out the window at a tree. The tree had been there all their lives and was a sign of security for both her and the child. One day, she went to the kitchen to make her usual urn of coffee, looked out the window and, instead of seeing a tree, she saw a mountain!

In astonishment, she ran to her neighbors and asked, "What do you see?" They replied in unison, "I see a tree." But the woman believed that it was possible that the tree had grown into a mountain, and wondered why the others couldn't see it. While the older ones were questioning the woman's vision, no one took notice of the child. As he walked through the door, his mother turned to him and asked, "Child, where have you been?" The child said, "I was out climbing the mountain."

Tuph Street

By Bönz Malone



The King of Beers. ©1990 Anheuser-Busch, Inc., Budweiser® Beer, St. Louis, MO

Return of the Boom Bop

Black-Owned

By Greg Tate

start

Frank Foster is not one of the household names of jazz, even after a 40-year career in music. True fans know him as an accomplished multi-reed player and as a prodigious arranger. He's best known for leading the Count Basie Orchestra from 1986 to 1995 after Mr. Basie's death. Though he was recently honored at Harlem's Aaron Davis Hall by an esteemed group of his peers, including Max Roach, Tito Puente, Joe Williams, and Quincy Jones, Foster is still a road warrior hardly on the verge of retiring at 68. Of late, he's reestablished his legendary big band, the Loud Minority, whose theme song became a minor classic during the Black Power movement. As a bandleader, social critic, and jazz scholar, Foster is about upholding the values of the bebop revolution that spawned him.

What did it mean to you as a young man to join the Basie orchestra in the '50s?

After two years in the prison that was the U.S. Army, it was phenomenal. In the army, every move was dictated by someone you couldn't relate to, like a hillbilly who didn't like you for what you were. That made it twice as bad. If it was someone who looked like Charlie Parker giving me orders, I wouldn't have minded carrying them out. The fact was that the people who were over me in the army hated me and my kind. They couldn't use black people or jazz musicians, so life was really hell in the army. Coming from that to the Count Basie Orchestra and touring all over the States, Western Europe, the Far East—and interacting with people of all nations and all colors—was a great experience that I had for 11 years.

What did Basie teach you about being a musician?

What I learned was that music is about communication. That we can't just play the music for ourselves with an attitude to the audience that you can dig it if you want to, and if you don't, that's too bad. Whenever Charlie Parker played a beautiful solo, a hip friend of mine would always say, "Bird's telling a story." Well, I got the story, but a lot of people who couldn't adjust to this new approach to music *couldn't* get the story. So what I learned from Basie was how to get your story across. It's not about how much technique you can display to let people know you can get around on your instrument. It's about telling a story through a melody and harmony and certain devices used in musical arrangements. This means that in places you'll have tender moments and soften your tone and even romance the folks. It's not about knocking people down with every note.

How did the older guys in the orchestra feel about the bebop movement?

Frank Foster's Loud Minority are a bebop big band with revolution on their mind.

Well, they respected the prominent bebop musicians. I mean, they had to respect Bird and Dizzy and people like Miles, Max, J.J. Johnson, Bud Powell, Ray Brown, and Art Blakey. But they didn't profess to know what it was about, nor did they jump on the bebop wagon and try to play that music. They just went straight ahead playing what they played. I played my little bebop on top of what they played, and sometimes it fit and sometimes it didn't.

Now, Mr. Basie didn't let me play ballads because he probably didn't like the bebop approach to playing ballads. He liked Eddie Lockjaw Davis or Ben Webster, who had more of a romantic twist to their tone. And when it came to writing arrangements, Mr. Basie would tell me, "Keep it simple. Don't try putting everything you know inside of four measures of music. Leave some room for me to tinkle around and for the rhythm section to be heard."

Why did you decide to leave?

There were several reasons. I had two young sons by my first marriage, and I wanted to be close to them. My first wife was pressuring me to come off the road. That road life where you're doing all those one-nighters is a family killer. I also wanted to play more as the '60s rolled around. I was into Coltrane and I wanted to get free and expand my horizons.

How do you feel about the current generation of jazz musicians?

I appreciate these younger musicians who are recovering melody and recovering the elements and rudiments of music, and not just getting up onstage and playing all they think they know and not learning a song. If somebody plays "Stella by Starlight" and nobody says, "Hey, man, you're playing the wrong chord changes," then a jam session isn't a learning experience. The young crop of musicians who are concerned with studying the music and knowing the forms will keep the music on the right path.

When you were invited back to the Basie band as musical director in 1986, what were your intentions?

Initially, it was not to write any new arrangement that Mr. Basie himself wouldn't have liked. I followed that for a year or two. Eventually, I got itchy and wanted to experiment and move on. Basie himself was more creative than people knew. He was progressive and didn't want to stay in the same place either. A creative mind cannot stand still; a creative body cannot be mired in cement. After nine years of fighting this battle, I finally said I'm giving up and going back out there on my own. I really tried to uphold the swing thing and keep Basie intact. Now I'm back to the Loud Minority.

Do the new Loud Minority still have a social protest element to them?

Not as heavily as in the '60s and '70s. In the early '70s, I conceived a composition called "Hey Brothers and Sisters, What Happened to the Revolution?" I never recorded it because it seemed like the revolution took a new nosedive. Now a lot of people may hate me for this, but the movement for social progress seems to have gone from the black thing to the other minorities. After *Roe vs. Wade*, it was the woman thing, and now it's gay rights. And it seems to be going on with the idea that, well, You people got what you wanted back in the '50s and '60s, so y'all shut up and sit down now. I'm still talking about rights for black folks because I still see this flagrant racism going on.

Do you feel racism has affected the development of the music?

Strangely enough, racism hasn't done a thing to stem the tide of modern, straight-ahead jazz. When jazz musicians get together, we aren't seeing race; we're just seeing musicians, old and young, black and white, developing their craft. Part of what these musicians are actually talking about is mowing racism down and mowing down hatred and violence. The point is to keep the music happening in spite of whatever else is going on. And that's what I'm still about at age 68.

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GET economics 101

fiscal inequality in schools is the basis of the american caste system

by elsa nefertari cleo

The gulf between employer and employee is wide. CEOs earn seven-figure salaries, while those at the bottom endure the effects of corporate downsizing. But fiscal inequality sets the tone for Joe Worker's life long before he receives his first paycheck—in fact, it's already in place by the time he gets his first report card.

It hardly needs to be said that schools in the U.S. are separate and unequal. Not only is there an enormous disparity in quality of education between public and private institutions; there's a gulf between public schools in wealthy communities and their overcrowded, underfunded counterparts in poorer neighborhoods. And the toll this takes on underprivileged kids—not to mention the adults they grow up to be—is devastating.

The inequitable distribution of tax dollars—compounded by gridlock at every level of government—keeps those most sorely in need of a good education from getting one. "Most public schools in the United States depend for their initial funding on a tax on local property," says Jonathan Kozol in *Savage Inequalities* (HarperCollins). "There are also state and federal funding sources....But the property tax is the decisive force in shaping inequality. The property tax depends of course upon the taxable value of one's home, and that of local industries."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX TEHRANI

CLASS STRUGGLE A crowded high school in Brooklyn

In the New York area, for example, the nation's largest public school system receives only $8,000 per year for each child. But in suburban areas like Long Island, where expensive homes abound, kids are allocated $10,000 to $15,000 every year. Theoretically, a higher level of state aid to poorer school districts helps make up the difference. But lobbyists from wealthier areas continue to pressure state officials against large sums being spent on city schools, and across-the-board state budget cuts are also hitting education where it hurts.

During the 1988–89 school year, New York State contributed 44.2 percent of city school costs; by 1995–96, the state was providing only 37.2 percent of those expenses. If the next round of proposed budget cuts goes through, the state will contribute even less. This means local districts will have to absorb even greater responsibility, using stopgap cost-cutting measures like study hall instead of teacher-directed instruction. As frustrating as this is to teachers and administrators, the students always suffer worst of all.

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education has long attempted to send aid where it's needed the most. Federal funds available under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, along with specifically targeted initiatives—such as the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program—amount to an average of 6 percent of each state's education budget. But America has fallen behind other industrialized countries in quality of education. In 1989, then president George Bush proposed the America 2000 bill, setting admirable but unrealistic national education goals for the year 2000 like "American students will be first in the world in math and science achievement" (in a 1991 ranking of 13-year-olds in 15 countries, the U.S. placed 14th in science) and "Schools will be free of drugs, violence, unauthorized guns, and alcohol." But one controversial aspect of the bill, the school voucher program—whereby students would be allowed to transfer from public schools to private ones and take their public-school allocations with them—led to the bill's defeat.

When Clinton came into office, he modified America 2000 by removing the voucher program, renamed it Goals 2000, and in 1994 it passed Congress. Forty-three states have chosen to participate, receiving federal block grants that are regranted to individual schools to implement the new standards. According to a Department of Education statement, "Every [participating] state is using Goals 2000 to support their own effective approach to improve student achievement. In Massachusetts, Goals 2000 funds are being used to support the creation of charter schools. In Kentucky, funds are being used to encourage parental involvement in ongoing reform efforts. In Illinois, challenging standards for student achievement have been set in six core subject areas." Hilda Sanchez, an East Harlem school administrator, concurs: "Goals 2000 comes at a time when there are less and less funds in the schools for professional development programs." But already some members of Congress are hoping to include the program in 1997 budget cuts. Meanwhile, a separate voucher-program bill is now before Congress, which Clinton has threatened to veto.

As one Chicago teacher recently put it, U.S. students take standardized tests, but they don't attend standardized schools. Those tests help decide which students are admitted to which universities. And the difference between the Ivy League and the local community college determines who in our volatile job market signs the paycheck on the front—and who signs it on the back.

The average 10th-grader—rich or poor, black or white—will tell you that he hates school. But will he drop out, or squeak by with a B average and go on to college? A crucial deciding factor can be the educational environment around him, the support system that sends him a clear message about whether or not he has any hope of achievement later in life. Here's what some VIBE readers had to say:

If one school gets $10,000 per student, all schools should get that. Obviously, if you base it on property taxes, the rich get more money, which is wrong.

The people who own property in poor black districts are old white people who don't want to pay higher taxes to support the education of the black kids they have no investment in.

White students should be exposed to black teachers, but black students don't necessarily benefit from white teachers, who are often insensitive and label black children as unruly.

In a perfect world (not accounting for affirmative action, which I am opposed to), I think that the teachers should be as diverse as the students. You hire whoever's best for the job. I don't care what color they are.

Standards need to be increased, as well as teachers' salaries. The environment is important too. Who can concentrate on learning with the ceiling falling on your head?

Because of the clever way that district lines are drawn, schools are almost as segregated as they were before *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Busing gives some minorities at least a fighting chance to obtain a better education.

GET UP ON IT

GET SMART: **U.S. Department of Education**, 202-401-1576, http://www.ed.gov. **National Library of Education**, 202-219-1692, library@inet.ed.gov. **American Federation of Teachers**, 202-879-4400, http://www.aft.org. **National Education Association**, 202-833-4000. **United Negro College Fund**, 800-331-2244. **National Consortium for Educational Access**, 770-469-6110. **National Alliance of Black School Educators**, 202-483-1549. **Council on Career Development for Minorities**, 214-631-3677. **National Head Start Association**, 703-739-0875. **THEN CALL 800-REGISTER TO REGISTER AND VOTE!**

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GET UP ON IT

teacher of teachers

dr. howard stevenson breaks down the science of education

by oj lima

If you ask a guidance counselor how exams affect a student's self-esteem, or a teacher how home life influences a child's classwork, they'll both refer you to the same specialist, Dr. Howard Stevenson. At the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, the 38-year-old instructor's classes mix complex theories of community psychology with grassroots approaches to family care. This father of one is also well versed in everyday issues like school desegregation, funding, and violence prevention, and their influence on both students and parents. Stevenson's upcoming books (*Academic Village* and *Mind Games*) on black culture and education will be required reading for anyone trying to study or teach within the U.S. educational system.

GET UP ON IT

What is your take on Brown vs. Board of Education, *the Supreme Court decision that integrated schools in this country?*

The United States was actually fulfilling its credo of democracy and equity. People can debate what the ruling meant, but it was overwhelmingly important for the government to say that the needs of African-Americans ought to be on the front burner instead of not even on the stove.

Is residential separation at a university the same as segregation?

No. Segregation started as black people having no choice about where they could live, work, etc. It makes no sense that people are using that term to describe minority students' freedom to make independent choices. It's a repetition of the Jim Crow atmosphere where black people are told they do not have the right to choose what they want. Dormitories that focus on African-American culture are essential. Anybody, including white students, can live there. Why aren't people talking about the 95 percent of white students who choose to live together?

Are you surprised that the most segregated public school systems are mainly in northern states?

That doesn't surprise me. In the North, schools have used subtle strategies to prevent integration from having its full impact. Families move out of certain neighborhoods or decide to send their children somewhere else because they have the economic ability to do so.

Does it make a difference whether schools are desegregated if the curriculum isn't changed?

Originally we thought that being in white schools meant that our children were going to get a better education. On principle, we want our kids to be in an integrated educational environment. The curriculum should include the lifestyles of the different students that attend the school, so they can see aspects of themselves, their neighborhoods, and their struggles in the way math, science, and history are taught.

Are there other specific issues about the public school system that concern you, especially as a parent?

Violence in the schools, and what kids struggle with to protect themselves on a daily basis. You can't start learning about history if you're scared that someone is going to jump you. Kids need to talk about their fears and ways to negotiate living in a potentially unsafe environment. You give kids a sense of personal empowerment and confidence when you have them talk about their anxiety as part of the curriculum. It helps them feel safer when they've taken control of their situation, rather than it taking control of them.

LESSON ONE
"Teachers should be accountable to people other than principals," says Stevenson.

Why is funding for public schools based on property taxes if it doesn't guarantee everyone an equal opportunity for a good education?

For America, it's equity that you get what you've put in—that's fair. Some people perceive that as balance, because, had folks in poorer districts put more in, they'd have gotten more out. But I disagree with the whole premise, because to me that's not equity. This country tolerates hierarchy but doesn't question its disadvantages. It's implicit in our actions that we accept the fact that some people won't make it.

Are the talents of minority students in private schools overlooked or not graded equally?

There's no question. If a counselor in a private school says a child is incredibly bright but he's perceived to be distant, one reason may be that there aren't people like him there. Some students have difficulty on occasion, but their advisers generally don't have the knowledge to evaluate the behaviors of students of color as smart. They tend to classify them in less promising categories. It's a sad phenomenon that happens again and again.

What do you think when a white teacher says a student of color is doing well but has disciplinary problems?

I would want to know more about specifically where that resistance is coming from. In terms of black psychology, resistance is positive, not negative. Many kids of color have attitudes to protect themselves from a racially hostile context. An attitude is a good thing for them to preserve, even though it's negative for the school context. Schools have to be challenged about their perceptions. The student must also be challenged to realize that this is a different world with different demands.

How should teachers deal with black vernacular and other forms of language?

You have to make it a bridge to translate to other languages. We should stop downgrading the vernacular of black kids, which is a language in and of itself, and think about students learning more than one language. More importantly, language includes how kids see themselves. If you take that away, you remove the kid's sense of self. Then what does he use to leap to another language? You've taken away his tools to connect with other areas of knowledge. The problem is, many teachers aren't bicultural themselves. They don't want to participate in a language they're unfamiliar with.

Why do teachers give up?

Teachers get apathetic when they feel their hands are tied—meaning they might not have much force to stop behaviors in the classroom, or their good ideas aren't supported within their school system. You circumvent that by creating relationships with the neighborhoods and making teachers accountable to people other than principals.

What do individuals who want to teach in the inner city need to be successful?

They have to appreciate resistance, be spontaneous and flexible. They must be willing to have the students teach them, and have their own cultural values and background challenged. And they must use what they've learned from their experience to challenge their own family and community values.

In general, is public education getting better, worse, or remaining steady?

It's remaining steady. What would make it better is if communities become more involved in how their children are educated. If parents viewed their child's education like they did their hot running water—because you can't take a bath without it—schools would definitely improve.

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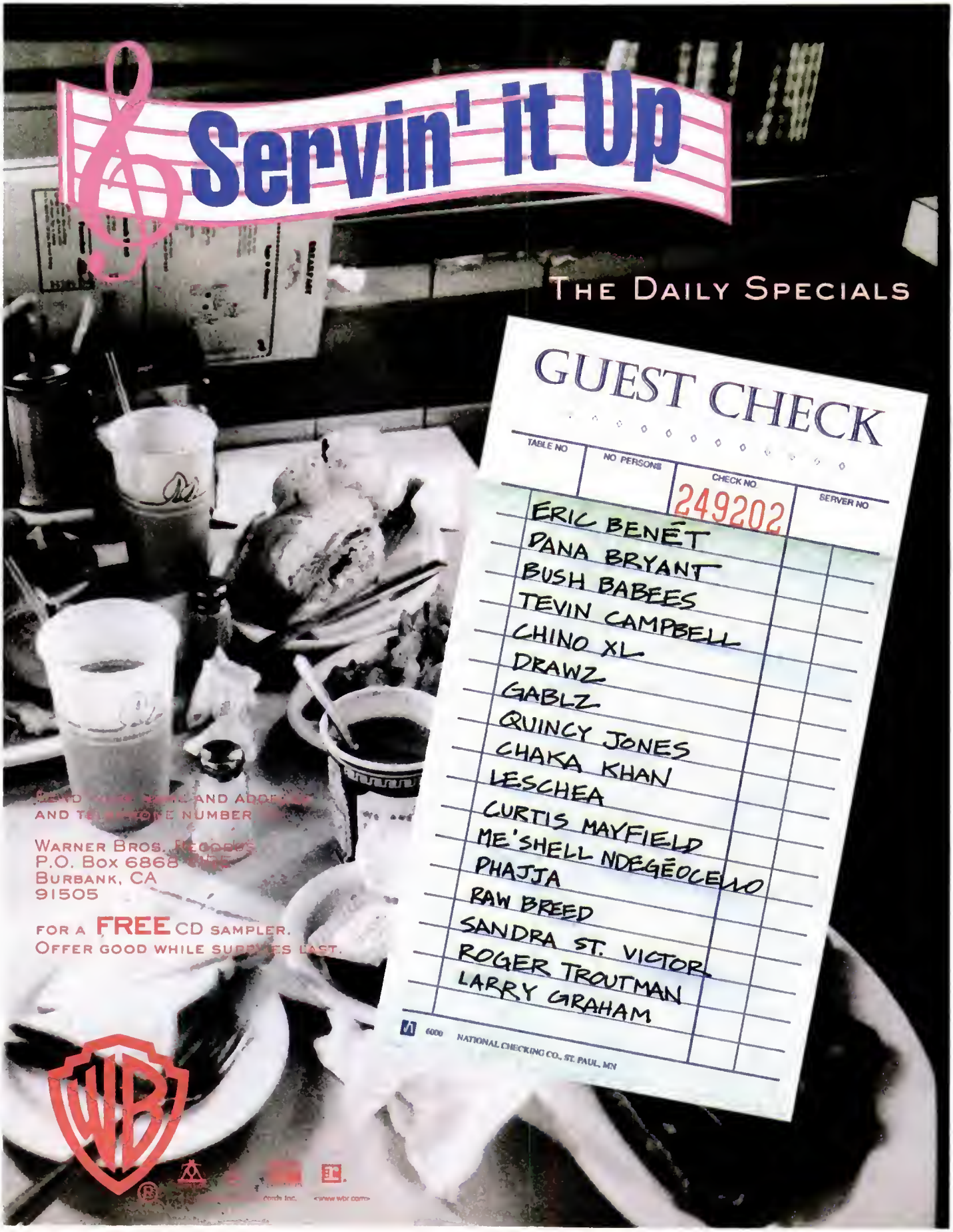
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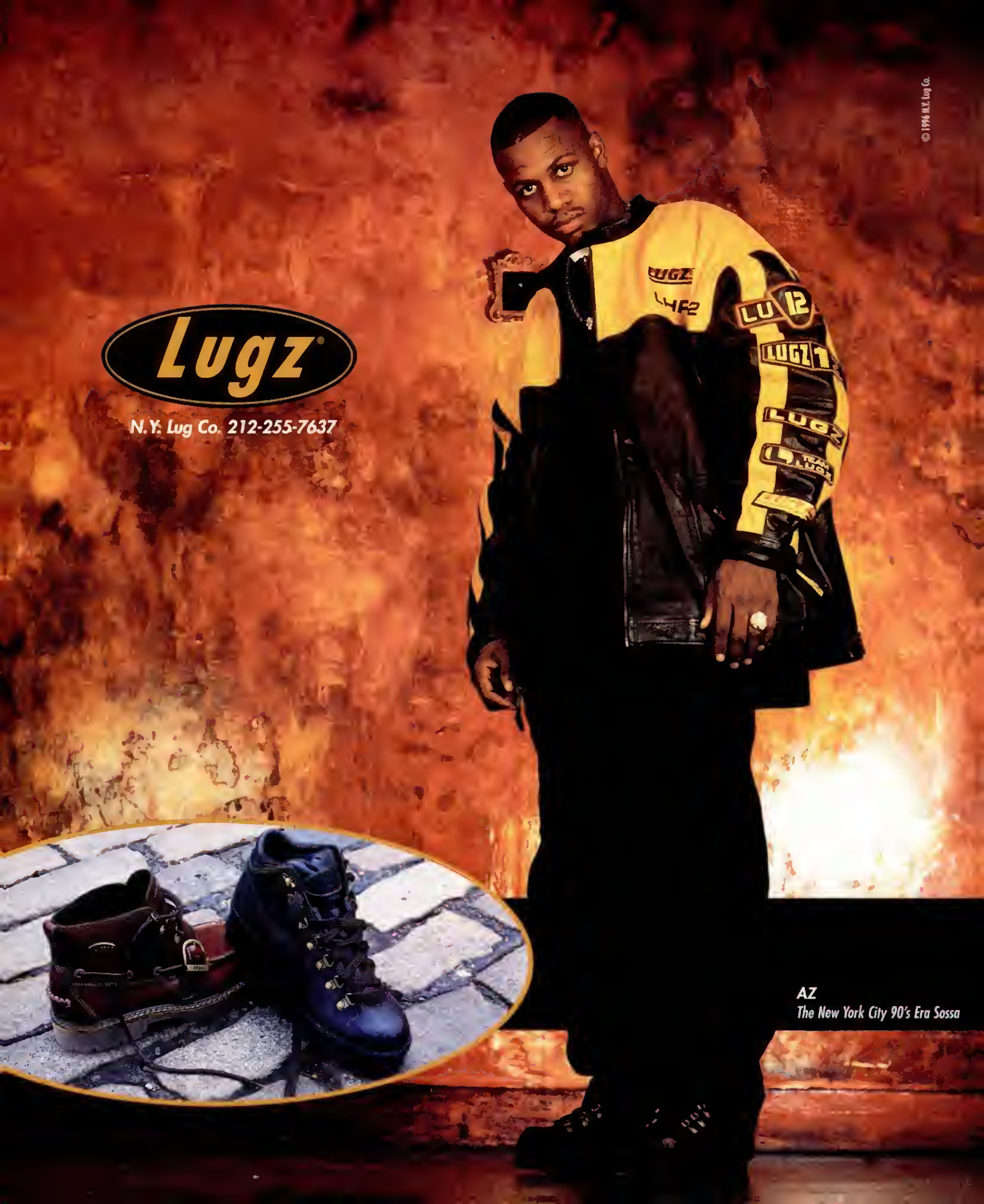
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AZ
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NEXT

PEOPLE ON THE VERGE

"I BET PEOPLE ARE GOING TO SAY, 'NOBODY'S this fuckin' positive,'" predicts petite hip hop jazz songstress/writer Erykah Badu. "I'm not naturally. Being righteous is a full-time job." So why does the 25-year-old, almond-eyed South Dallas native curb her ill instincts? Call it a mandate from the divine entity she refers to as "Father/Mother God."

The self-proclaimed "messenger of spiritual and artistic rebirth" *has* been communicating with the gods—specifically, current love deity D'Angelo. He and Badu remade Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell's 1967 "Your Precious Love" (in the same L.A. studio as the original; on Gaye's birthday, even) for the *High School High* soundtrack. Badu also appears in D'Angelo's "Lady (Remix)" video, where—alongside Faith and a very pregnant Joi—she emits flashbulb radiance: bedecked in silver, galé flowing long and breezy, neck draped in hematite. "I just love anointing myself with my culture," she says coyly. "It's a queen thang."

Badu's graceful vibe is evident in "On and On," the poetic first single from her yet-to-be-titled debut album, due later this fall. "I was born underwater / With one dollar and two dimes / Yeah, you might laugh / 'Cause you did not do your math" she speak-sings, her phrasing so reminiscent of Billie one momentarily forgets Diana ever sang them blues. Badu's voice—a hint of southern belle forever stuck in her throat—flows like the clearest, sweetest honey.

She started utilizing her pipes at Grambling State University. Back then, in 1989, Badu (so named for her favorite ad-lib) was still Erykah Wright, theater arts major and spiritual base seeker—"religious rebellion," she calls it. Disenchanted before graduation, she returned to Dallas to waitress, and teach dance and drama. "*And*," Badu says with exasperation, "open for *every* hip hop act.

"Everything I sing about," she continues, "comes from what I've learned about the world or myself." Somehow, Badu stays decidedly pleasant. But positivity ain't always easy. "Some days, you have to catch yourself from cussin' someone out!" True. And direct them to Father/Mother God. *Akiba Solomon*

ERYKAH BADU
Positively Divine

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARC BAPTISTE

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"I MIGHT LOOK ROUGH," A TIRED CASE Woodard explains, "but I do have feelings, and that's what I try to express through my music." Too bad talking is obviously the very *last* thing the 26-year-old R&B crooner wants to do. The success of Case's debut single, "Touch Me, Tease Me," from the *Nutty Professor* soundtrack, is keeping him busy. In the Valhalla, N.Y. studio/home of producer Kenny "Smoove" Kornegay (Changing Faces, Intro), Case's girlfriend, Mary J. Blige, is helping choose publicity photos; his overprotective publicist is fielding questions.

Truly feeling the labor of recording his love-inspired, self-titled album, Case hovers over the engineering boards and quietly resolves to do whatever it takes to be finished.

NEXT

Corny, *probably*, but love is what motivates Woodard, who began singing professionally as a teenager, providing background vocals on Al B. Sure!'s 1988 *In Effect Mode*. It's true that "Touch Me"—a tweaked Schoolly D track featuring hip hop's queen of guest appearances, Foxy Brown (making her usual mindless Isaac Mizrahi/Dolce & Gabbana references)—isn't much more than freaky sex talk. But according to Case, who possesses the sexy, self-assured street qualities of Method Man and the soulful romantic sensibilities of Donny Hathaway, "People want to hear real love songs they can relate to. My songs say something more than sex, sex, sex."

Lately, though, it seems Case's sex life is all people want to talk about. He ignores rumors that Blige's ex (Jodeci member K-Ci Hailey) is bitter about her new relationship. "Mary and I have been together for a while, and I guess everybody's mad. But hey," he says, glowing at the mention of Her name, "I'm not mad at *anybody*."

Unfortunately, MCA Records, Blige's label, is. In addition to writing many of the album's tracks with Woodard and Faith Evans, Blige recorded vocals on three songs. Because the tracks weren't cleared through MCA, which didn't want Blige to appear on the album, only "Touch Me" made the final cut and Case's release was delayed.

But you can't stop inspiration. "Love songs will always be around," Case says, swiveling back toward the buttons and lights. "They help people learn to deal with their relationships." Simple logic. Case closed.

Shani Saxon

CASE
Just the facts, man

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVIS FACTOR

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IT TAKES *BEAUCOUP* CONFIDENCE TO EMERGE FROM A SOUTH JERSEY 'hood with a sound so distinct your producer has the nerve to christen it "dark-child funk." Such is the case with R&B's newest groove girl, Gina Thompson. With slick, straight, and coyly cut hair, she's seated in New York's sista-girl Go With the Flow salon, looking much too young to reach the bottom notes that she does on record.

So she proves it. Amid much Friday-afternoon press-'n'-curl *kaflamma*, Thompson lets out a funkdafied wail, emerging from her pedicured toes, riffing to the roof. The 22-year-old church-raised singer—whose big break came when she met producer Rodney Jerkins (of SWV fame) two years ago at a gospel recording session—sits smiling. Satisfied, she explains just what dark-child funk is all about. "It's the way that I feel when I'm hummin'," she says. "I can't just sing a song. I've got to *go there* with much flavor, deep and dark. I can't help but put my own attitude on lyrics."

Consider the cool shade felt on Thompson's newly released debut album, *Nobody Does It Better* (Mercury), served to full, can't-tell-me-nothin' effect on the hip hop–tinged, Sean "Puffy" Combs–produced remix of the first single, "The Things That You Do." She explains: "Sean heard my album being mastered at the Hit Factory and liked that song." Her words hang in midair, like she's running the track through her head. "He definitely did a dope remix."

Talking with Thompson, one notices that there are only two things besides singing that seem to make her eyes light up: shopping ("One day me and my family are gonna *need* one of those anonymous self-help groups to help me stop doing it!"), and spirituality—the reason she tagged a gospel segment, "He'll Make a Way (Interlude)," onto *Nobody* at the last minute. "God opens doors and you can have anything you want if you work for it. On the real, though," she says after a thought, taking one last glance in the mirror to give her 'do a final pat, "there are a lot of *lazy* people out there."

Deborah Gregory

NEXT

GINA THOMPSON
Dark-child funk

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From left: Paul Spencer Denman, Stuart Matthewman, Andrew Hale

SWEETBACK
Baadasssss songs

"SWEETBACK IS AN EXtension of Sade," admits saxophonist/guitarist Stuart Matthewman about his latest musical adventure. After a 12-year gig backing the moody, ethereal Sade Adu, Matthewman conjured hiatus group Sweetback with pianist Andrew Hale and bassist Paul Spencer Denman. Ensconced high above New York City's humid early-summer heat in a comfortably cooled office on the 21st floor of the Sony Building, Matthewman, who hails from Yorkshire, England, expounds on the trio: "We're doing soul, trip hop, ambience, and dub off-tilt. And it *envelops* you."

"We're a good foil for each other," Hale says over the speaker phone from his native London, describing how freely the band achieve their integrated style. "We have basic sketches of ideas, get together and do it—" Matthewman then interrupts, almost finishing Hale's sentence: "Sometimes a melody will come first, sometimes the beat. We just write for that moment."

The end result: *Sweetback*, namesake of Melvin Van Peebles's classic 1971 blaxploitation film *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*. Of the album's 12 atmospheric tracks, only five contain caressing vocals, courtesy of Leroy Osbourne, Maxwell, and Groove Theory's Amel Larrieux, and the velvety rhyme stylings of rap jazz maestra Bahamadia. The remaining songs are filled with piano, saxophone, and drums, and are treated with echo and reverb machines that paint solemn, barren pictures. Sound seeps into your ears like a soft, sweet mist. "Our music is simplicity with spaces," Matthewman says. "You don't have to fill every space with noise."

It was in 1982, in a similar, larger band called Pride—featuring Sade as vocalist—that Matthewman, Hale, and Spencer first met. That group metamorphosed into the group Sade, who debuted in 1985 with the jazzy, very un-'80s *Diamond Life*. Osbourne, whose vocal stylings Andrew Hale describes as "brilliant," joined the group two years later.

And in a musical universe presided over by powerhouse diva (and divo) singers and heart-palpitating, thumping beats, neither Matthewman nor Hale is concerned that *Sweetback*'s off-the-mainstream credo could result in limited radio play. "I'm more concerned with making music that touches your heart, not necessarily music that is going to be played on the radio," Hale says. "And I have faith in word of mouth."

Omoronke Idowu

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC JOHNSON

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"MY DOMAIN"—THAT'S WHAT ANDRE LEVINS PREFERS TO CALL HIS HOT-ASS, PICTURE-BOOK bedroom in Hempstead, Strong Island. In this land, *Right On!* and *Word Up!* pinups of the Lost Boyz, Monica, the Bootcamp Clik, and Aaliyah hover protectively over the 14-year-old pecan-tan prince like raised ancestors (consider them divine inspiration). Such trifles, though, are only momentarily amusing for the pubescent MC. For now, he wants to rhyme. And he won't wait until he grows up.

"I've been working on my skills for two and a half years," he says, adjusting his oscillating fan. "It's not like people pushed me into making a record and I got on within a month." Andre's brow furrows. "I know people have paid more dues than that, like the Wu. But for my age, two years is a lot of dues."

While other kids were playing abracadabra-the-booty-grabba, Levins was writing poetry and freestyling in ciphers. Knighted A+ by his production team, the Smith Brothers, Levins cowrote much of his debut album, *The Latch Key Child* (Kedar Entertainment/Universal). A brilliant testament to the lost art of emceeing, A+ dismisses all notions of being a cute kiddie act on songs like "Gusto" and "Party Joint." Even next to his celebrated elders that guest on the album—AZ, Q-Tip, Prodigy of Mobb Deep—Levins's scratchy, pre-voice-change alto flows like a vet.

Fact is, his moms made him do it. Barbara Mann, less than 18 years Levins's senior, went to high school with the twin Smiths, and encouraged Andre and his two younger brothers, Lakeim and Naquan, to rhyme—like *she* did not so far back in the day. Mann entered them in talent shows, but they weren't exactly lip-synching Doug E. Fresh's "The Show." "We used to always do Onyx," Levins says, grinning. "I used to be Sticky Fingaz and they would be Fredro and Suavé."

The cooler air outside is beckoning, and Levins is getting restless. "A+ is not just another shorty coming out to rap and not knowing what he's getting into," he says like he's talking about someone else. The man-child fans himself with his shirt and glances outside. "I got love for the game."

Paula T. Renfroe

A+
Now in session

NEXT

PHOTOGRAPH BY JILL PETERS

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ESCAPE FROM DEATH ROW

DR. DRE, HIP HOP'S MOST WANTED PRODUCER, HAS MADE A CLEAN BREAK FROM HIS PAST. NOW HE'S CREATING HIS OWN ENTERTAINMENT CONGLOMERATE, AND IS BANKING THAT TALENT ALONE WILL PREVAIL. FOR THE FIRST TIME, DRE DETAILS THE FALLOUT AND THE AFTERMATH. *BY RONIN RO. PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN WINTERS*

STYLING BY XAVIER CABRERA/CLOUTIER. GROOMING BY ROBIN FREDRICKSZ

Many people in the hip hop industry have gone from using two turntables to two bodyguards and two faces to survive. Thirty-one-year-old Grammy Award–winner Andre Young, better known as Dr. Dre, is one such person; he has to be. His recent departure from gangsta rap powerhouse Death Row Records was less than amicable; hence the towering guardian discreetly watching our every move.

It's hot as hell in Los Angeles—in more ways than one—and Dr. Dre is sipping from his second Long Island iced tea at an outdoor table at Tony Roma's restaurant. A few pounds heavier, relaxed and confident, he details how Death Row Records came to exist and earned $125 million in the past four years. "Death Row was a collaborative effort—even musically," admits the label's cofounder and sonic visionary. As Dre tells it, he once had big plans for Death Row, but now they're all shot to shit. "I was trying to take it places no other record company had ever been," he says. "Not just limiting myself to R&B and hip hop. I wanted to branch off into jazz, reggae, and black rock 'n' roll."

From his days in the World Class Wreckin' Cru, up until he helped change the face of rap with the gangsta ensemble N.W.A, he was just a young, happy-go-lucky kid outta Compton. "I've got a million dollars, house, car. I was wylin'," he says. Things changed when Ice Cube left N.W.A, saying he'd been underpaid by Ruthless Records, the label owned by group member Eazy-E and business partner Jerry Heller.

In 1991, after joining forces with Suge Knight, Dre got released from his contract, and the two of them established Death Row Records. Dre had the beats, Suge had the business acumen and the muscle. But even as Death Row dropped Dre's masterpiece *The Chronic*, and multiplatinum discs by Snoop Doggy Dogg and Tha Dogg Pound, Dre began to realize that no one else was seeing his larger vision for the label. "At first it was just a big family thing," he says. "But the more money that got made, the further apart everybody came. It's like, certain people started becoming what they hated."

This time he's out there on his own, trying to prove that an artistic visionary can also be a leader. Dre has no doubt that he's ready. "I'm a grown-up, now," he says. "I'm ready to handle my business."

Dre says creativity will be the rule at his new label, Aftermath Entertainment, a joint venture with Interscope Records (the same company that distributes Death Row). "Now I'ma be able to do whatever I wanna do," he claims. "If it works, it's on me. If it fails, it's on me. But I'm an innovator. I like trying things."

After polishing off his second plate of appetizers, he wipes the corners of his mouth with a linen napkin. "We're gonna make a lot of money in the future," he predicts. "And I'm gonna make a lot of superstars. That's my business. I take people that have a talent, mold it, make it presentable to the public, put 'em out there, and have their back 110 percent."

He is quick to point out that this time around, he owns the label. "I'm 100 percent owner of Aftermath Entertainment," he says. Likewise for the master recordings of his compositions. "I own all the masters," he says point-blank. "Suge does not get a cut of anything that I do. Nobody gets a cut of anything Dre does—except Interscope." Aftermath's day-to-day operations will be handled by "a staff of black females." He calls them Dre's Angels because, very soon, he plans to be "like Charlie: unseen, just heard."

Dre says he didn't even speak with any other companies before finalizing the Aftermath deal. "I've got love for Jimmy Iovine and everybody at Interscope because they looked out for Death Row when nobody else would," he says. "They put up the money, bought me out of Ruthless, and they've been looking out ever since."

"Suge and Dre are both enormously talented people," says Interscope copresident Iovine, trying to sit on two stools at once. "They both understand what it takes to make a great record, and they would never settle for anything less. I don't have any question on how successful either person will be." He says he doesn't know the details of their parting, but offers that "sometimes you don't feel like having to ask someone else every time you want to do something."

"Actually, it was a chain of events," Dre explains. "I wasn't feeling comfortable with the people I was around. Everybody wasn't professional." He says he always wanted things at Death Row to be "right and positive, because I'm a positive person. And the situation I was in wasn't. Plain and simple. It was too much negativity. Most likely, there are gonna be records coming out dissing me, dissing people I've worked with and am going to be working with. It's just a lot of negative bullshit. So, from here on out, Death Row Records don't even exist to Dre." Then, choosing his words carefully, he adds: "I have nothing bad to say about anybody that's with Death Row. It's just not my vibe."

RBX, an MC featured on *The Chronic*, says Dre's relationship with Knight deteriorated after that album's release. "From what we discussed, Dre was getting sick of homeboy. [Death Row's] whole business is gangsta rap. That was a conflict right there. Dre told me, 'I'm sick of drive-bys and all that shit.' Then Tupac coming to Death Row was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Dre appears relieved to be free of the heavy atmosphere at Death Row. "The mentality there is, you have to be mad at somebody in order for yourself to feel good, even to be able to make a record." He repeatedly alludes to Death Rowers feeling the need to publicly deride others in the industry "instead of just laying back, *getting off everybody's dick*, making some strong music, and going on with your life."

Likewise, he has no patience for the war of words between the East and West coasts. Dre stresses that he has absolutely nothing to do with any "bad blood" between Death Row and Puffy Combs's Bad Boy Entertainment. "Me and Puffy have talked on the phone," he says. "I have love and respect for what he's doing."

But the presence of Dre's former CEO is still felt throughout L.A. No one I meet in this town will dare to mention Suge Knight's name—let alone speak on the record—presumably because, as Tupac once boasted, "muthafuckas is scared shitless of Suge." For his part, Dre won't risk being quoted on the terms of his departure from Death Row. "I can't get into that," he says flatly. "Let's just say I'm very, very, very financially stable and I don't have to push any more buttons if I don't want to."

Though his official title was president of Death Row Records, Dre says he took nothing with him when he departed. "I don't feel like I need it," he explains. "In this business—I have to quote something KRS-One said—'Only talent will last.' And I'm a talented person. We'll just see who's on top in the next five years."

Aware that former business partners have been running their yaps, Dre takes time out to counter some of the more prevalent rumors. In a recent interview Knight mentioned that Dre's new accountant urged him to sell his collection of automobiles, the implication being that Dre may be strapped for cash. "Actually, I have more money than I had with Death Row," he says. "And my business is being handled a lot better. I got rid of all my cars because I don't feel like one person can drive more than one car at one time. I could pretty much buy any kinda car I want. But I don't feel that it's necessary to own 30 fucking cars or roll around in no showboat shit. I just wanna be comfortable. I wanted a white Mercedes with tan interior, and that's what I bought."

Even after having his manhood questioned, Dre maintains his composure. "Now that's gotta be the funniest shit I've heard in my life," he says when confronted with rumors of homosexuality. "I can't even respond to that dumb shit. All I gotta say is, I love my wife and that's the only person I love. That's it. That's the person I go to bed with every night."

When asked if he learned anything while at Death Row, Dre simply nods. "I've learned a lot," he says. "Being with Suge, I got more involved in the business part of the record industry. We used to roll around everywhere together, talking about plans. I never did that with Eazy. My thing then was just making the records. With Suge, it was making the records *and* staying on top of the business." He also learned a lot about people, "how certain people can change, things certain people will or won't do."

But, as with any education, the time came for Dre to graduate. In March he called Jimmy Iovine and told him, "I'm ready to bounce. Make me a deal, and I'll make you some hit records." Dre continues, "That was that. Very simple. I ain't got nothing to say to nobody. I'm just out. Period. I don't like it no more."

"IT WAS TOO MUCH NEGATIVITY. FROM HERE ON OUT, DEATH ROW RECORDS DON'T EVEN EXIST TO DRE."

Inside a small rented office in North Hollywood, Dre's latest videos are coming together. They'll support the first singles off Aftermath Entertainment's inaugural LP, a compilation titled *Dr. Dre Presents...the Aftermath*. In "Sexy Dancer," a stripper asks RC (Ruben Cruz) "Do you want a table dance?" Cut to RC in a cream-colored suit, singing for his supper to the delight of adoring female extras. His amorphous vocal phrasings bring to mind Death Row crooner Nate Dogg. The song should do well on radio, which is what Dre's banking on. He's no stranger to treading the fine line between art and commerce.

Manipulating computer monitors and film footage like two 1200s and the "Apache" breakbeat, the engineer cues up the next video, "East Coast West Coast Killas." This is the one Dre's hardcore fans will be checking for. The clip paints a dystopian fantasy in ominous colors. An all-star bicoastal cast (Nas, KRS-One, RBX, and Cypress Hill's B-Real) perform for a throng of shabby punk-rock extras, cholos, and 'bangers stuck in a grim new world order. RBX raps while strung up on a burning crucifix. "MTV might not go for all that fire," says Dre while the tape rolls. The Blastmaster is beamed in via satellite on a large screen overlooking a prison yard. "KRS is the shit," exclaims Dre, "but what's with all the green lighting? I feel like I'm watching a Sprite commercial."

Next up is Nas, clad in black leather and headrag, dropping a typically apocalyptic verse: "Desert storm in this modern-day Babylon...." Dre nods along with every syllable. Someone mentions that Interscope wants to see more footage of Dre himself in the chorus, but that's not his style. Onscreen, B-Real, his face swathed in tattoos, warns that he's an equal opportunity "anybody killer" for those promoting the coastal rivalry. →

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT
"Would I ever do that N.W.A material right now? No way. I'm into totally positive moves."

As bleak as this video may be, its subtext is one of healing. And Dre is one of the few producers who could bring all these artists together. While Death Row prepares to release an MC Hammer comeback record, Dre fields calls from hip hop's A-list, all the way back to Rakim and Melle Mel. He can deliver true MCs: no sequin outfits or diaper pants, no Santa suits or war stories. Dre doesn't set trip; he sets trends. While others smoke beef, he brings home the bacon.

Dre may not be working with Snoop, but he *is* working with Nas, whose sophomore effort, *It Was Written*, lounged at the top of the pop charts for four weeks this summer. The teaming of these East and West coast titans took many by surprise, but Dre says their collaboration was years in the making. He first met the gifted young Queensbridge lyricist in 1994. Nas, in town on business, dropped by the video set for Snoop's *Murder Was the Case*, which Dre was directing. "It was, like, five in the morning," Dre recalls, "and we kicked it around for a minute."

"Everybody grew up on N.W.A shit," says Nas. "Everybody felt *The Chronic* and all that, so everybody know Dre's one of the illest niggas. I always wanted to hear an East Coast nigga rhyme to one of his beats."

With uncanny foresight, Dre said he decided to produce the song "Nas Is Coming" because "if I do this record for Nas, it'll help my chances of getting the Firm on my label." The Firm is a collective of raw New York artists including AZ, Foxy Brown, Nas, and others. "The album is gonna be on my label," Dre announces, "and it's gonna be hot."

While working on "Nas Is Coming," another gem was conceived. Dre says that Nas, RBX, and "a gang of niggas" were at his house "smoking a pound of weed and just vibing to this track" in his home studio. "I was saying, East Coast, West Coast. And everybody in the room just started going 'Killa.' " RBX (who recorded a song dissing Dre and Death Row only last year) recorded a freestyle verse while Nas sat on the floor in the hallway and started planning his attack. Dre told himself, Oh, shit, we might have something here.

He called B-Real, and within days B's verse was on tape. Method Man agreed to participate, but he never showed up in the studio. "I still don't know the reason why, but it's all good," says Dre. "Maybe me and him'll get to work together in the future, because I dig his shit." With Meth absent, Dre thought, Well, damn, who else is fly? You know—who else is the shit? Bam! KRS-One!

Dre reached Kris Parker by phone, and the Blastmaster was ready to go: "Within the midst of all this nonsense going on," KRS explains, "with people now carving up the country like it's theirs, Dre called me up and said, 'Yo, let's do this. Let's end this bullshit.' Now there's a side of KRS-One that loves the battle, the challenge. But when you start to talk about you're going to kill somebody....Somewhere along the line we gotta stop and look at how we destroy ourselves. That's why I did the record. Let me not be the one to destroy us. Let the battle rage on—on wax!"

High on the list of Dre's future projects is *Helter Skelter*, Dre's long-awaited reunion with Ice Cube. "If Cube is still into it, I definitely wanna do that record," Dre says. "I don't give a fuck if it's 10 years from now, and we're, like, walking on canes with gray hair. That record will be amazing."

But, for now, Dre is flooded with demands on his time: mixing singles and editing videos; deciding on an Aftermath logo; playing a gun dealer in the upcoming film *Set It Off* (with Queen Latifah and Jada Pinkett); dealing with screenwriters and actors for upcoming movie projects, including an autobiography tentatively titled *Please Listen to My Demo*.

Dre's older, now, happily married with children. These days he avoids nightclubs and indulges his passion for fine food. "I'm a lot more humble," he says, "a lot more laid-back. I value what I do more now. This is the point where, all the shit that your parents were pounding in your head, this is the point where you realize what they were talking about."

Asked for his final thoughts on N.W.A and its aftermath, Dre sits there, his face leaden, forehead creasing. "That was my past," he says. "What I thought was the thing to do then." There follows a pregnant pause. "I really got some deep shit to tell you," he says hesitantly. "I did this song 'Fuck tha Police'...I mean, I think *Straight Outta Compton* was a classic hip hop album. But I do look back on a lot of the things we were saying and doing then and go, Damn. But the shit was dope at the time.

"But then—I never told nobody this in an interview—my brother got killed while I was on tour with N.W.A. He got into a fight." Here, Dre puts his hands near his ears and mimics a head being jerked sideways. "Neck got broke and all kinda shit," Dre sighs. "The last words he heard was 'Fuck tha Police' from a nearby radio. So it kinda fucked with me. My brother was my best friend. He was three years younger than me." Dre tells of being on the road when he received a phone call with the bad news. "You never forget that." His eyes are like shattered prisms. "I grew up with my brother, I mean—like I said, I'm not ashamed of anything I did but, you know, the shit is crazy.

"Would I ever do that N.W.A material right now? No. No way. I'm more into totally positive moves."

I been there, I done that,
You got guns, ayo, I got straps,
A million motherfuckers on the planet Earth,
Talking that "hard" bullshit 'cause that's all they're worth
—Dre's new solo joint, "Been There Done That"

Dre sits at a table inside Georgia on Melrose. A waiter named Stirling keeps the drinks coming. Russell Simmons stops by to say hello. Motown's embattled president and CEO Andre Harrell calls Dre over to a table; they speak for 30 minutes or so. ("Dre is making history," Andre says after their powwow.) Shaquille O'Neal waves at him from across the room. "All right, Shaq, baby," Dre calls out.

Ever since he started rolling with a more respectful crew, Dre says he's getting "more respect than I've ever gotten in my life. Everywhere I go, people are like 'Yo, man, that was the smartest move you coulda made,' and it's actually fucking me up. I've got, like, Patti LaBelle calling me, Luther Vandross, Magic....Everybody's just giving me major props for leaving that situation and I'm, like, Damn! Was the situation I was in *that* fucked up? People are giving me respect as a person, for being a very wise black man, and I'm loving the shit. Right now, I'm exhaling in a major way. And my records are coming out a lot better than they were then."

But as bright as the future may look, Dre's past keeps stepping to him. In an interview with *The Source*, Suge Knight told of going to Dre's house to pick up master tapes for a Death Row greatest hits album. He said that Dre hid inside while an "off-duty cop" came outside holding a gun. "Be a man, muthafucka," Knight taunted Dre in print.

Dre tells it differently: One day, someone rang his bell claiming he was Jimmy Iovine of Interscope. "I didn't answer the phone," Dre says. "Somebody else did, and said, 'Jimmy Iovine? Let him in.' In comes Suge with eight or nine niggas, you knowhaimsayin'? Some of them I got love for; some I don't. I opened the door—I got my four-year-old stepson, Tyler, with me, and I say, Yo, what's up fellas? Come on in.

"Suge said, 'We trying to get the tapes,' and I go, Okay. All the tapes are being copied right now. 'Cause I want a copy of all the work that I done. He said, 'Okay. Can I talk to you for a minute?' I said, Let's go in here in my family room.

"Me and Suge sat down. Suge was smoking a big-ass cigar. He asked me for an ashtray. I said, No. You can use this motherfucking coaster. He started talking about, 'Yo, man, there's no reason for us to be beefin', we need to be making millions, getting together, this-and-that.' I'm, like, Okay, that sounds good to me. I didn't say this, but I'm thinking, Long as you on some positive shit, it's all good.

"All of a sudden, out the wild blue, he starts going, 'Well, um, you should put the Death Row logo on your upcoming record.' I'm, like, Huh? That can't happen. No way, no how. That is an insult to me and to all the people in my organization that I'm building. So I'm, like, Okay, you can tell him what he wants to hear right now. I don't want no bullshit, especially in the house.

"I'm violated, disrespected. If he wanted to be a man, Suge can come to my house at any time by himself and he's more than welcome. There's no need to bring eight or nine motherfuckers with him. If he wants some shit that I got that's his, I'll give it to him. But when he came over with all his guys, automatically I thought he's coming to bring the noise. But I ain't tripping, 'cause I ain't that kinda nigga."

Days later, Suge Knight appeared on the cover of *The Source* standing between two Rolls-Royces. The accompanying article—which included a photo showing Knight with some of his remaining stars: a nervously grinning MC Hammer, an expressionless Tupac flashing hand signs, and a dour Snoop—quoted Knight making numerous derogatory remarks about Dre and his new label.

"I'm, like, Okay, that's that mentality stepping in where you got something to prove to the people around you," says Dre. "It's all good. I understand. I ain't that type a person. The only thing I want to do is make records, live a comfortable life, and chill with my family."

Dre says the worst thing about his split with Death Row is "not being able to work with people I really enjoy working with. I can't work with Snoop right now. I'd love to, but I can't. Or with Nate Dogg. I love Kurupt, Daz, Rage. I hope God will bless them and they will become successful—and that their business will be handled the way it's supposed to be."

"And about this East Coast–West Coast shit?" he says. "Kill that noise! There's definitely no reason for it. That's the biggest case of black-on-black crime I've seen in my life.

"I just want to be positive," he says, "helping people help themselves, not saying anything bad about anyone, just being the real Andre Young."

Of course, we've heard such well-intentioned nods before from other gangsta types. But Dre has no fear of breaking with the past. "I want nothing that has to do with Dr. Dre," he says defiantly. "I wanna even take the 'Dr.' off my name and just be Dre. Just being Andre, true to myself. I ain't no gangster; I'm not trying to be no gangster. I'm not dishing nothing out, but I ain't taking none. I just wanna live my life and that's it." ■

DRE DOESN'T SET TRIP; HE SETS TRENDS. WHILE OTHERS SMOKE BEEF, HE BRINGS HOME THE BACON.

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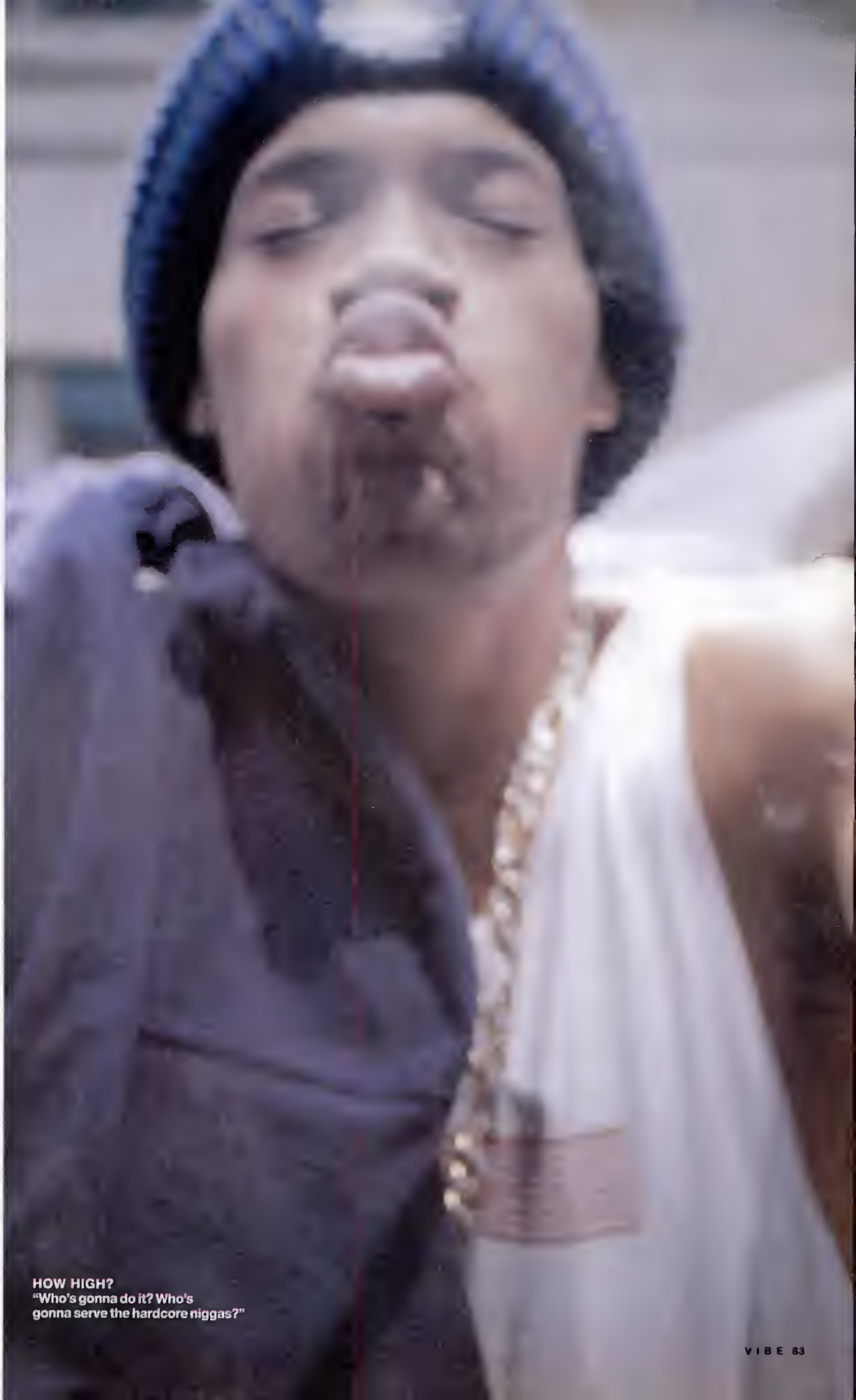
RED
HOT

REDMAN, NEW JERSEY'S OWN PSYCHEDELIC MUSHROOM, TAKES *SACHA JENKINS* ON A LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT. *PHOTOGRAPHS BY BANU*

If you don't know who the fuck you are first, then you can't get open on nothin' else," says Reggie Noble, 25, a man *very* in touch with his outer-space–based alter ego, Redman. "I'm still finding out who I am," he says, blank eyes round like cue balls. "I found the first half, and when I get the whole circumference, I'ma be dangerous. It's gonna be some shit in this world." Red's voice splatters unnervingly, in a surreal, *X-Files* kind of way. I'm half expecting him to tell me he's really an alien, or some sort of glowing Antichrist. That's how he acts–like he's got some bizarre secret.

Redman's tall, slim frame is supported by a graffiti-stained weight lifter's belt. His stride is jittery, his actions random. As we stroll down New York City's lower Broadway, he transforms a construction site's scaffolding into a fitness center, flailing through a long set of pull-ups. The sun is blazing. Stunned witnesses stand slack-jawed in disbelief. "Oh shit," some say. "It's Redman."

Such antics comprise a strong percentage of the man known as the Funkadelic Relic and the Funk Doctor Spock, the man who created 1992's dusted *Whut? Thee Album* (gold) and 1994's *Dare Iz a Darkside* (gold). Redman is the personification of an urbanized psychedelic mushroom. Within the force-field limits of his reality-based story-saying, the ghetto's blood is resplashed with a capricious slant. There are the kitty-cat–finding exploits of the hip hop megahero detailed on "A Day of Sooperman Lover"; the banana-clip–fed sonic chaos of "Time 4 Sum Aksion"; the crude, swashbuckling "Can't Wait"; and the streetwise,



HOW HIGH?
"Who's gonna do it? Who's gonna serve the hardcore niggas?"

BANU REPRESENTED BY CREATIVE EXCHANGE AGENCY

instructional "How to Roll a Blunt." And those are just the highlights.

Redman's listeners are guided by the stained-glass eyes of an always-high B-boy day-tripper. He bounces the 'hood's pith off carnival mirrors, adds a bent consciousness to old blues. His new album—of which he refuses to tell anyone the title—is due any time now and promises more of the same.

But in real life there's a thin line between being an addict and being an avid dream warrior. "My label complains that I talk about blunts too much," Red says, as we ride wildly through traffic toward his hometown of Newark. We're in a spotless black Lexus, and Red's feet go quickly back and forth from brake to gas pedal, urging the vehicle to bubble along like a coochie dancer. "I talk about blunts because that's what I do. I smoke more than any goddamn body. And if I don't kick my shit for the bluntheads around the country," he says, "who's gonna do it? Who's gonna serve the hardcore niggas?"

The city of Newark is currently listed in New Jersey's white pages under "hardcore." Scores of abandoned factories rust undisturbed in the onetime industrial center. The town's annual murder and crime rates are competitive on the national level, and last year's slept-on celluloid slab *New Jersey Drive* chronicled the Brick City's tragic teen car-thieving culture. This is the fertilizer from which the Redman sprang.

"He gets raw with it," says Roz, Redman's sister, of her older sibling's lyrical style. "Creepy raw." Featured on Erick Sermon's recent "Tell 'Em," Roz is a talented MC in her own right. We're at their mother's upper-working-class–style home, the house Redman was raised in. There's a graveyard across the street, and the living room walls are plastered with gold and platinum RIAA plaques—trophies for Redman's own albums, and for his many guest and soundtrack appearances. Sparkling discs for MC Eiht's 1995 *We Come Strapped* and the soundtrack for 1995's *The Show*—which Red and Method Man thrust to platinum heights with the ecstatic "How High"—are among them.

"They use this block as a 'body dumping' block," Roz says eerily about a block that on the surface seems fairly sane. "I don't know why. But you've got weed over here, coke over there. You see it every day." Redman says it isn't all bad in Newark, though. "The 'hood ain't just about shootin' and sellin' drugs," he vehemently swears. "You got a lot of good things: Ghetto nigga and ghetto bitch get married out the 'hood. Niggas go to Great Adventure. Cookouts, barbecues—niggas can do shit without shit fuckin' up all the time."

Yeah, they can. But sometimes the best lessons are learned through messing up. "One time I performed at a talent show in downtown Newark," says Redman, one foot out of his mother's house. "Me and my boy Craig had been practicing all week. When we got there, the judge said, 'You can't curse.' But I got up there and forgot my lyrics. So I started freestylin'—and cursin' my ass off: 'Fuck that / Suck the dick.' They was, like, 'I-ight, Mr. Noble...' and cut my sound off."

That talent show was in 1987, a few months before Red met Erick Sermon and Parrish Smith at a local club, back when there was such a thing as EPMD. This was also before Red's mother, after busting him with weed, sent him to live five blocks away with his father—who in turn threw him out for the same thing. Soon after, Red moved in with Sermon, on Long Island. He stayed for two years.

"E-Double had a one-bedroom apartment," says Red, "and he already had one of his boys stayin' there. We used to have to duke it out to see who got the bed." Although quality sleeping was a first come, first served luxury, it was a small price to pay for the vocational skills that Red picked up during his Hit Squad tenure. "I miss the family we had," he says, face longing for the pre-EPMD-breakup heyday, back when the duo, Das EFX, and K-Solo were all a clique. Red currently gets by with a little help from the Def Squad—basically Erick Sermon and Keith Murray. "We analyze what's going on in this rap world," says Red, now coasting out of a Harlem candy store/cheeba emporium. It's a ritualistic pit stop before going to a down-low recording studio on the farthest edge of suburban Long Island. "All of us got heart," he says of his crew. "We keep each other alive."

But Redman doesn't restrict himself to rolling with Murray and Sermon. It was in 1995, when Redman and the Wu-Tang Clan's Method Man were on a promotional tour, that the pair penned the platinum smash "How High." "We was in Houston, in the Fourth Ward," Red says, "ridin' around with some nigga in a big-ass Suburban. He was, like, 'We gonna take y'all niggas through the 'hood.' I had a tape of beats that I was writing for my next album. When I put the tape on, Meth was in the back [of the van] rockin'."

Nowadays, there's talk of a Redman/Method Man EP. "It's definitely a possibility," Red says, steering his ride with his knees on a highway straightaway, free hands rolling a hash cigarette. "Being out there with another man on the mike—like a team—is the bomb. And I know Meth likes it too, because we both got our own identities. Everybody can't be on him, and everybody can't be on me—but everybody can be rockin' with both of us."

For now, though, Redman is stuffed into the basement of a family abode in agrarian Wyndanch, Long Island. He's with former Def Jam recording artist and current label employee Nikki D and underground Brooklyn rapstress Paula Perry, orchestrating their words like a caffeine-sprung Henry Mancini. It's all for a dramatic skit on his new album. "This is Nikki D," she announces, Connie Chung–style. "We live at the chicken-head convention. We've got the weaves, the big shoes, the attitudes—it's on and poppin' out this motherfucker."

"Red is a real 'feel' artist," says David Greenberg, fortysomething family man/studio owner/seasoned mix master. "A perfectionist. He doesn't settle." Red is slumped over the knobs on the mixing board like a pondering pit bull. At one point, after swinging his gold link chain around his wrist like a hula hoop, he rolls into a corner, puts a wooden stool over his face, and monitors the scene through its legs like an incarcerated scarface—Hennessey bottle near his ankle. Five hours later, after millions of unsatisfactory takes, Nikki and company finally lock down the minute-long piece according to Red's specifications. "That's what a nigga like me do," he says of his grueling studio workings. "I take my time with each little spectacle."

Redman also trusts no one with advance studio versions of his work. Not Def Jam, not VIBE—no one. Especially other MCs. "They want to know what's going on," is his only explanation for the above sentiments, as we roll back into Manhattan again. He does play me snippets of songs concocted for his new album. One that specifically shines has a hook that features Redman screaming, "It's on fire tonight!" Then the song finds him yelling some of the questions I'd been asking myself about him all day. "Now do I look crazy?!?" he yells, midsong. "Deranged, maybe?" Deranged, I think. Most likely. ◘

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COBI JONES

Kickin' it

"I'm on the tail end of a lull," says five-foot-seven soccer giant Cobi Jones without a hint of sarcasm, "but everything's starting to go now."

Let's take a moment to clarify what constitutes a "lull" for this 26-year-old midfielder, whose explosive play and trademark dreads have made him one of America's first world-renowned soccer players: He's between episodes of MTV's *Mega Dose*, the network's first health program. He doesn't start making appearances for the nationwide youth soccer promotion "Kick It Up" until next spring. In the meantime, Jones's meager responsibilities include leading the powerhouse L.A. Galaxy through Major League Soccer's first season, reviewing movie scripts, and preparing for World Cup qualifying rounds.

After playing in Brazil's First Division, the California native returned home this year to kick it with the Galaxy. Even more than benchwarming teammate Andrew Shue (of *Melrose Place* fame), Jones has made soccer the hottest game in town—the Galaxy periodically outdraw even the Dodgers.

After the MLS championships in October, Cobi's World Cup commitments begin. Helping the U.S. team make it to France in 1998 is foremost in the former Olympian's mind, but other goals include finishing college ("I refuse to die without that degree") and bringing his favorite sport to prime time. "I want to get soccer places it hasn't been in this country," he says. The world's most popular sport still gets less major network coverage than pro bowling, but MLS games can be seen on ESPN and the MLS championship will be broadcast on ABC.

Cobi's musical tastes are as varied as his professional endeavors. "Being a Gemini," he says, "I go in waves." The Notorious B.I.G. and Junior M.A.F.I.A. are currently rattlin' the speakers of his jeep. And despite appearing in Nike ads and on *Beverly Hills 90210*, he can still go out clubbing relatively hassle-free. "Soccer's not at the level yet where people ask who you're sleeping with," he says with a laugh. "We're not the people who sign $15 million contracts and then complain that there are reporters in the locker room."

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RADIO ACTIVITY

Why are radio stations playing the same songs over and over? Why can't you hear Seal, Raekwon, and MC Lyte on the same station? *Charisse Jones* delves into radio's ultra-competitive universe and finds out that it's not always about the music—but it *is* always about the money.

Radio used to be *dope*," says Ed Lover, morning jock on New York's Hot 97 and a former host of *YO! MTV Raps*. "Now urban radio beats kids in the head with the same 12 hip hop records, and they have no appreciation for anything else."

Turn to a radio station that gears itself toward what has come to be known as an urban audience—a group of people 60 to 80 percent black—and you'll be hard-pressed to find the folkie songs of Tracy Chapman or Maxwell, the bouncing rhythms of go-go, or the plaintive trills of the blues. In urban radio's major markets—Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Dallas, and San Francisco among them—a listener must turn to one part of the dial to hear the Dells, another to hear Rick James, and another to hear 2Pac or Mary J. Blige.

In an effort to hold on to a targeted audience, many urban stations have sacrificed the variety and adventurousness that characterized old-school black radio in favor of the new niche programming, which "superserves" a specific audience by giving them an overabundance of a certain kind of music—rap, smooth jazz, pop, whatever. And for better or for worse, based on the high ratings of niche-formatted stations like New York's Hot 97 and 92.3 the Beat in Los Angeles, as well as "power" country and "power" alternative formats across the U.S., radio audiences seem to like "certain kinds" of music a lot.

"Being all things to all people just doesn't cut it anymore," says Lover's boss, Steve Smith, program director at the highly rated, Emmis Broadcasting- owned WQHT (Hot 97). Why? In a word: competition. It began to escalate during the late 1980s when investors such as Evergreen (which now owns 32 stations) and Clear Channel Communications (over 100) noticed that stations playing music created by African-Americans often had the highest ratings in their markets—and the potential to bring in millions from advertisers. The number of urban stations jumped from 284 in 1989 to 347 in 1995, and urban radio saw a 27.1 percent increase in revenue between January 1993 and December 1995.

While the final decision about what music gets played ultimately rests with the listeners, the

STYLING BY EMIL WILBEKIN. LYCRA SHIRT BY 2B1. HEADPHONES BY COBY

pool of music from which they choose has grown increasingly narrow. Most top stations have a playlist of no more than 20 to 30 songs. "A station as narrow-minded as this is going to, at best, only promote music from that genre," says one disgruntled Hot 97 listener on the World Wide Web, "and make its listeners intolerant of other kinds of music. At worst it will flood the industry with substandard product and corrupt the very music it's claiming to promote." Ed Lover hates niche (he calls it "narrow-minded") programming. "There is *no reason in the world*," he says via cell phone, "that Dionne Farris or Seal should have a problem getting their songs played on urban radio. It's *sickening*."

But there's a belief among radio consultants and program directors that the fewer songs a station plays, the higher the ratings will be. "People want to turn on the radio and hear songs they're comfortable with," says Keith Naftaly, vice president of A&R at Arista Records and award-winning former program director of San Francisco's KMEL and L.A.'s 92.3 the Beat. "People say they like variety, but if they liked it as much as they claim, you'd hear more of it on the radio."

Ratings back up Naftaly's claim. "We all live and die by a service called Arbitron," Hot 97's Smith says. Arbitron is a nationwide company that measures how many people are listening to a given station, and for how long they are listening. The higher the Arbitron ratings, the more money a station can charge advertisers for airtime. The loss or gain of a single rating point can translate into millions of dollars. In 1994 one New York City radio rating point was worth $3.9 million in advertising revenue.

Smith says it's most effective to maintain a core of listeners for long periods of time—and his station, one of the highest-rated in New York, does this extremely well playing the hip hop and hip hop–influenced R&B they've determined urban listeners ages 18 to 34 want to hear. "It's a benefit of niche programming," he says.

And niching brings in the dough, especially if a station appears to be more mainstream than urban. "Black radio" became "urban radio" in the late 1980s—to make it more salable by de-emphasizing blackness, radio watchers say. A new category, "churban" (crossover hits urban), also came into existence at the same time. Those stations, which may have slightly broader playlists—they play the occasional R.E.M., say, or Madonna, in addition to Monica and the Notorious B.I.G.—are perceived by record companies and advertisers as having even more of a crossover appeal. Quincy McCoy, urban editor at *Gavin Report*, the radio industry's most prominent industry trade magazine, says the logic to the changing identifications is simple.

"People who own and format the stations get money from agencies who represent companies like Budweiser and Chevrolet," he says from his San Francisco office. "And blackness traditionally gets the low part of the buy. If you're a 'black' station in the market, the advertiser skips you and goes to another station. How do you clean that up? You're not 'black' or 'urban' anymore. You're 'churban.' You send your white people into the advertising agency, and you get a better part of the buy."

Hot 97's Doctor Dre and Ed Lover

"You *could* go from Jimi Hendrix to R. Kelly to B.B. King," says an L.A. radio programmer. "But you wouldn't have any listeners."

WBLS legend Frankie Crocker

There is a lot of money on the line, but still, some music personalities, radio executives, listeners, and music critics argue that the result is that listeners aren't challenged, talented artists aren't exposed, and radio will become stagnant as rigidity prevails. "The kind of music that comes from artists like Des'ree and Seal is only one form of African-American–based music that has experienced a woeful absence on R&B stations," says J.R. Reynolds, R&B editor at *Billboard*, who has proposed in his The Rhythm and the Blues column a new radio format called "rhythm alternative," which would make a place for artists like Lenny Kravitz, Dionne Farris, Maxwell, Tricky, and other performers who fall outside of conventional rhythm and blues.

"What about the people who grew up on hip hop but who can appreciate the Ornette Colemans?" Ed Lover asks rhetorically. "Everybody should be able to enjoy all kinds of music on one station. Don't you think it would help close the generation gap if you could hear, right after a Tribe Called Quest song, where A Tribe Called Quest got their music and ideals from?"

Thembisa Mshaka, rap editor at *Gavin Report*, feels that the lines of definition as far as what black music is and isn't are too severely drawn. "If you're encouraging people over 35 to listen to songs recorded between 1965 and 1985, and encouraging the kids to listen to songs recorded from 1985 to 1996, that's two generations of African-Americans that are never meeting over the airwaves," says Mshaka, who enjoys Al Green as much as E-40. "You need the elders to be on the air with the hip hop heads."

But it's not the stations' job to close the generation gap—it's their job to make money. "We tend to hold on to this thing of 'Back in the day, you could hear everything from a rock record to a dance record on the same station,'" says Hot 97's Smith. "I think most people would argue that radio is better now. There are more choices. Back in the day, there was less competition. In many markets there was just one station playing black music, so the ratings were automatically competitive with pop stations. But when black music became a hot commodity, firms invested in the places that played it, more stations came into being, and the competition got fierce."

"It's not about what we *want* to do, it's about what we *gotta* do," says Maxx Myrick, program director of Chicago's WVAZ (V103), an urban/adult contemporary station. He's been in radio since 1978. "What we gotta do is make money and get ratings, or we aren't going to have these jobs. These are public companies, and the board of directors want to hear that they're making a return on their investment." He sighs. "It's just not possible to play a lot of the great music. You just can't take the chance."

Cliff Winston, morning personality and program director of Los Angeles' KJLH (Kindness, Joy, Love, and Happiness), an urban/adult contemporary station owned since 1979 by Stevie Wonder, says, "You *could* go from Jimi Hendrix to R. Kelly to B.B. King—and you wouldn't have any listeners. That's what college radio is for. And just because an artist is black doesn't mean the artist is playing black music." He notes that there have always been black artists, from Richie

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Havens to Joan Armatrading, who didn't get played on black/urban radio. "Many black-owned stations are struggling to compete with their pop and corporate-owned counterparts," he says. "They must cater to a particular age/income/sex demographic that is appealing to advertisers who want to target a particular audience—if they're going to survive. Black media enterprises are not missionaries, they're businesses."

At Chicago's V103, Herb Kent, the station's legendary "King of the Dusties," plays a wide variety of music—from the Impressions to the Time to Anita Baker to the Fugees. Here, new songs are played for a few weeks so listeners can become familiar with them, and then the records are tossed into the hands of audience researchers. What they find out determines a song's fate.

"We spend several hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on research," says V103's Myrick, whose format is No. 1 with Chicago listeners ages 25 to 54, the key demographic for companies selling cars, credit cards, and other high-end products. "There are some records that just don't work," he says, citing Tony Rich's "Nobody Knows" as an example; people simply were not checking for it when the research was done. "But Brandy's 'Sittin' up in My Room' was a hit, even though music from younger artists tends to burn out quickly here. We don't ask people why they don't like it. We ask them if they like it, how much they like it, and if they don't."

Once upon a time, radio programming was all about instinct. Program directors or disc jockeys would put a record on because they liked the way it sounded. If the request lines lit up, they knew they had a hit. No more. Ed Lover says that what's happened in radio is the same thing that happened when he cohosted *YO! MTV Raps*. "When black music became a billion-dollar baby, radio got crazy political. Like at MTV—at first it was just us programming the show. As soon as it became a million-dollar show, our power was taken away."

Stuff got real scientific, just as it already had with general market stations. "Call-out" research is one of the most important tools: Researchers telephone members of the station's target audience once a week and play hooks from the songs on their playlist. The audience members rate them, and then the station's program director reviews the data to determine how often a given song should be played. Besides monitoring request lines, some stations have street researchers who poll people randomly, or researchers who go to dance clubs to see what listeners are getting into. Stations look at record sales and peruse industry publications to find out what songs are working for stations elsewhere. But some in the record industry complain that such heavy reliance on research can send a good song to a premature death.

"Before you had the consolidation of stations into these large conglomerates, before you had consultants, you had radio guys who knew and felt the music," says Tom Bracamontes, vice president of promotions/urban music for Sony 550 Music, the home of R&B alternative artists like Des'ree, George Clinton, and Vernon Reid. "A lot of it was a gut check."

It could be said that Frankie Crocker, legendary DJ and program director for New York's WBLS, an urban/adult contemporary station, is, as far as radio is concerned, the progenitor of the "gut check." In 1971, when Crocker was named the voice of WBLS, the former jazz station became the first FM R&B station in the world. Over the next 20 years, the station was responsible for launching nearly every major black R&B and dance artist—from Barry White to Prince. Even now, Crocker's got his own style. "I hear something I like; it's mostly by ear," Crocker says. "Afterward, I look at research, but sometimes, I just put it on because I know it's good. That's how most of the black artists today got their start."

But today music selection has become so restrained that Hector Hannibal, program director for Washington, D.C.'s popular WHUR/the Adult Mix, says that some of his fellow programmers refuse to play certain artists on the strength of looks alone. "I think Maxwell's CD cover may have scared people off," says Hannibal, who has played Maxwell, Me'Shell Ndegé-Ocello, and other artists not usually heard on urban radio. "I asked one person in particular if he listened to the album and he said no—because he thought it was something that he couldn't use. He was basing it on the look of the artist."

"What about the people who grew up on hip hop but appreciate the Ornette Colemans? Don't you think it would help close the generation gap if you could hear, right after a Tribe Called Quest song, where Quest got their music from?"

Keith Naftaly says any kind of radio is a "delicate dance, a science. Even Babyface's acoustic ballad, 1993's 'When Can I See You Again,' was considered risky by urban radio." But programmers, won over by Babyface's track record and familiar voice, took a chance. "It was accepted," he admits, "and that's what moves the format forward."

Nelson George, screenwriter/music historian/VIBE contributor, and author of the award-winning *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, says that Hannibal is right. "The mentality is very reductive," George says from his Brooklyn home. "Program directors now are going for something easy to maintain." And the growing presence of white PDs—as urban stations are increasingly owned by white corporations—worries some who believe it's having a negative impact on what gets on the air. But Hot 97's Smith says that "there hasn't been a lot of flack" about the station having a white PD. "We provide a service to the audience and play what they want to hear. We listen and care enough about the audience to superserve it. I'd like to believe the other issues are not that important."

Ultimately, audiences and stations are going to have to meet each other halfway if the sounds on urban radio are going to be as diverse as the voices resonating throughout black America. But as long as money continues to speak the loudest, stations will only remain stratified, if not actually get more so. "Radio programmers, in their heart of hearts, know that average R&B listeners would be open to artists like Des'ree or Us3," says J.R. Reynolds. "But they would have to sacrifice I don't know how many rating points to get their audience accustomed to listening to those different sounds." He admits that listeners do usually like what they are used to. "But every once in a while, something new will come along that the kids get into, and the music will go off in new directions. That's what you saw with hip hop."

And it can happen again. Popular Bay Area DJ Michael Erickson, whose KMEL plays a mixture of pop, dance, and rap, says he once slipped in a Green Day song—and played it for three months—and the listeners dug it big-time. "When you play Green Day and then you put on Dionne Farris after, it doesn't sound as extreme anymore," he says.

He's right. There's a lockstep that prevails among many urban listeners, making them resistant to new sounds not quite funky enough, rhythmic enough, or conventionally black enough. If a guitar-laced ballad by Tracy Chapman follows an R. Kelly groove, it *is* likely some will flip the dial. But it's also true that young blacks are the ones who created and supported music as varied as dancehall, hip hop, and house, and some would presumably appreciate a little Me'Shell Ndegé-Ocello thrown in with their Method Man. Stations might lose some listeners by becoming more eclectic, but they stand to gain others who are interested in an old-fashioned idea known as variety.

Ingenuous? Maybe. But that's what people thought kids were in 1979 when they were scratching records and spinning on swatches of linoleum. They were a tiny minority, and the beginning of a new way of dealing with music no one could have predicted. They are the reason urban music is making so much money now. The backward-cap-wearing early B-boys and B-girls, however subconsciously, changed radio, music, and, many would argue, American culture. Perhaps what urban radio—all radio—needs is some of that spirit. "A really good station follows its listeners," says Erickson. "But occasionally a station asserts itself and leads them." ◘

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MISSISSIPPI BURNINGS

Who's torching black churches, and why hasn't the massive investigation

PHOTOGRAPH BY LES STONE/SYGMA PHOTOGRAPH (RIGHT) BY CATHERINE ALLPORT

cleared the smoke? *By Ron Nixon and Dennis Bernstein*

The night sky in Smithdale, Miss. glowed yellow and orange. Flames shot up from Springhill Freewill Baptist Church, home of a black congregation in rural Amite County, just north of the Louisiana border. Three shadowy figures ran from the direction of the fire to a waiting car. "Burn, nigger, burn!" one shouted as they drove away in a cloud of dust. They had just kicked down the door of Springhill and used hymnbooks and artificial flowers to start the blaze. The date: April 4, 1993—the 25th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

The evening of terror was just beginning. Hours later, Charles W. McGeehee Jr., Roy McGovern, and Jerome Bellelo, the same three white teenagers, would torch Rocky Point Missionary Baptist Church, another black house of worship 12 miles away in Pike County.

In Alcorn County, coming together to combat hate

"That will teach you niggers," they shouted as the building went up in flames. All night the three teens had driven around talking about burning "nigger churches," according to court transcripts. They decided to burn Springhill and Rocky Point because, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Jack Lacy, both served black congregations.

For African-Americans in these rural Mississippi counties, the church burnings were a painful reminder of the past, when Pike and Amite counties were known as the church-burning capitals of the world. In these two counties alone, more than 20 churches were burned or bombed in the 1960s during the height of the civil rights movement. "We in Pike County led the nation in church fires and bombings," says Albert W. "Red" Hefner, a longtime resident of McComb, a small Mississippi town near both churches. "That wasn't a real proud statistic." In recent years, Mississippi and neighboring states Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, and Louisiana have all seen a new wave of church burnings, conjuring up vivid memories of the bad old days.

"I felt totally drained when I heard that our church had burned down," says Margaret Tobias, who lives up the

road from Springhill. "We had just finished refurbishing the church and had our first service in it when it was burned." The fire was especially painful for Tobias, who not only witnessed church bombings during the 1960s but also survived an attempted arson at her home in 1965 when all of Amite County was aflame.

In Amite, black residents have long been the victims of other racially motivated attacks—mailbox shootings, cross burnings, hooded Klansmen yelling racist slurs while riding through black neighborhoods. But the recent church fires did more than damage buildings; they forever changed the lives of both congregations. "The church was our whole life, but [after the fire] the feelings just weren't there."

Still, in many ways, the Rocky Point and Springhill parishes were lucky. Shortly after setting the churches ablaze, all three of the perpetrators were captured. After admitting to the arsons, McGeehee and Bellelo were sentenced to 37 months in prison. Because he had a record, McGovern was given 46 months. "It's ludicrous for prosecutors to recommend only 30 to 37 months when a maximum sentence is 10 years," says Marvin Hollis of the McComb NAACP. But according to Jack Lacy of the U.S. attorney's office, it's rare for first-time offenders to get the maximum penalty.

Three years later, as a new wave of church burnings spreads across the South, many communities throughout the region are simply wishing and waiting for the answers. They hope that the arsonists will be caught or, at least, that their concerns about a rising tide of racist violence will be acknowledged. It doesn't look encouraging. "We don't want to say that these fires are racially motivated without any proof," says Rev. Johnny McDonald of St. Paul Primitive Baptist Church in Lauderdale, Miss., which burned last April. "But we would like to know something. So far, investigators haven't told us anything. What are we supposed to do?"

McDonald isn't alone in his frustration. Across the South, many ministers of black churches are asking similar questions. According to a report by the Center for Democratic Renewal (CDR), which tracks hate crimes nationwide, there have been more than 90 burnings—not including vandalization and threats—at predominantly black churches in the South since 1990. By the state fire marshall's count, 60 churches have been burned in Mississippi during that period—26 were ruled accidental, 21 were ruled arsons (12 of these were black churches, 10 predominantly white). In eight fires, the cause couldn't be determined. Most fit the same profile—small, rural churches far from major roads, generally torched in the early hours of the morning.

Minister Johnny McDonald stands with his sons amid the remains of his church.

Shortly after Rocky Point was destroyed by fire, the church's minister, Rev. Henry Manning, had a stroke and died. "The church was his heart," says his son, L.H. Manning. "It was just too much to take." One of Springhill's deacons, Bennie Hardges, had two strokes.

The chaos and confusion created by the fires have caused the congregations of both churches to split. At Rocky Point, disagreements erupted over how to rebuild, and repairs have yet to begin. While Springhill has been restored, disputes have divided the congregation. "After the church burned, things weren't the same anymore," says Donald Tobias, Margaret's son.

In late 1995 the fires caught the attention of the media and, soon after, that of the President and the U.S. Congress. At President Bill Clinton's request, the Department of Justice and the Treasury Department say they have placed 200 agents on the church-fire cases. In a rare bipartisan effort, Congress recently passed legislation mandating tougher penalties for burning a church (although few have got them so far, since so few arsonists have been caught).

While civil rights leaders and church members applaud these efforts, many of them tire of the endless speeches, media reports, and federal actions, which they feel are largely symbolic. Instead, many are concerned about the tone and the focus of the investigations. They say that instead of concentrating on white hate groups that have a history of burning churches, investigators have downplayed racism as the fuel behind the fires and have even targeted church members themselves. And while the number of church burnings continues to rise, federal and state officials—rightly or wrongly—have dismissed the idea that there might be an organized conspiracy behind the fires.

Indeed, Michael Kelly argued in a July 15 *New Yorker* article that the black-church-burnings phenomenon has been exaggerated. The *Wall Street Journal* had gone even further in a July 8 op-ed piece, dismissing the epidemic of black-church fires as a hoax and blaming the CDR for the rise in the number of fires by inspiring copycats and stirring up fear among black churchgoers. "What the Ku Klux Klan can no longer do," wrote attorney and author Michael Fumento, "a group established to fight the Klan is doing instead."

Whatever their merits, such statements outrage attorney and activist Rose Sanders, who witnessed the brutal beatings of African-Americans and the bombing of black churches during the civil rights struggle. "Whenever it comes to attacks on black people, those who attack us are always given the benefit of the doubt," says Sanders, a cofounder of the National Civil Rights Museum in Selma, Ala. Sitting amid portraits of deceased black activists from Harriet Tubman to Malcolm X, Sanders questions the motivation of those who would not only deny that there is a conspiracy, but also that racism is a factor in the church fires: "In many of these cases, they have no idea who's burning these churches," she says in a low voice. "How do they know it's not racism if they are not looking? So far, law enforcement has refused to call these burnings what they are: racist acts of terrorism."

For a number of people, the probe of the church fires in Mississippi is a classic illustration of what's wrong with the federal investigations and why so little has been accomplished. Just one federal agent is assigned to work on possible civil rights violations involving the state's 60 church fires, according to a spokesman for the FBI in Jackson. The investigation on the state level is headed by James O. Ingram, commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, who represented the state of Mississippi last June at the White House conference on the church burnings. Ingram is no stranger to church fires. He headed the FBI's Mississippi office in the 1960s, when he investigated the murders of civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman (the case that inspired the movie *Mississippi Burning*; Willem Dafoe's role in that film was reportedly based on Ingram) and the bombing of black churches.

But Ingram also had another, less public role in the FBI. He was a part of the notorious counterintelligence program (Cointelpro) implemented under then FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. The purpose of Cointelpro, according to a memo from Hoover, was to "disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize black nationalist hate-type organizations." The program targeted black leaders such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panther Party. Ingram served in the FBI Division Five "Racial Intelligence" Section, which carried out the Cointelpro agenda. In 1985, after details from Cointelpro were released, Ingram was unsuccessfully sued along with two other FBI agents in Jackson for violating the civil liberties of a black man.

A large man with graying hair and piercing eyes, 64-year-old Ingram seems uncomfortable answering questions about his role in Cointelpro, but he offers no apologies. "I was an employee of the FBI for 33 years, and during that time there were certain duties that we were asked and instructed to do," he says from his office at the State Highway Patrol headquarters in Jackson. "And one was the counterintelligence program. But that's long past history. But at the same time, ask any individual in Mississippi, and certainly the black community, and you'll find that Jim Ingram has been a solid citizen to them."

Few in the black community agree. "Ask Mr. Ingram how many church fires he solved in the '60s," says Charles Tisdale, editor and publisher of the weekly black newspaper the *Jackson Advocate*, who points out that until the 1993 convictions of the three white teens, no one had ever been convicted of burning a church in the state of Mississippi. "I don't think he's going to find anything," says Tisdale.

It's not just Ingram's past that disturbs black residents like Tisdale—it's also his tendency to play down the seriousness of the church burnings. "We baven't had the same problem with church fires here in Mississippi that other states have had," says Ingram, sitting in his office surrounded by mementos that span a career in law enforcement of more than 43 years—including an autographed photo of J. Edgar Hoover. Ingram says that until very recently Mississippi had "no great problems" with arson at black churches. "We had three churches burned on June 17, two days before the White House conference on church fires," he says, "which was embarrassing because we really thought that we had been fortunate up to that time."

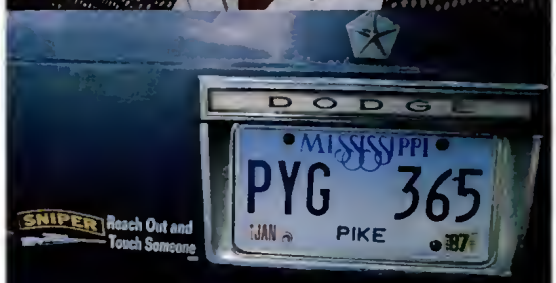
Data from the state fire marshal's office contradicts Ingram's assessment. The earliest fires occurred in 1990, more than five and a half years before national attention was focused on black-church fires.

But before the past 18 months, when church fires began to get significant media coverage, arsons at black churches weren't effectively investigated in Mississippi—or anywhere else, for that matter. Since 1990, when data first began to be collected, no state besides Arkansas or Mississippi had prosecuted anybody under federal civil rights statutes for burning a church. Another problem is that the Mississippi fire marshal's office has only 13 investigators to look into thousands of fires each year. These 13 are supplemented by specially trained deputies at the county level in sheriff's departments across the state. Even so, the number of people available for the inquiry is still relatively small considering the task at hand (13 investigators for some 3 million people in 82 counties). As a result, most fires in Mississippi are not adequately investigated or are dismissed as accidents.

In Yazoo, about 40 miles from Jackson, when a white suspect was caught burning a black church, local authorities attributed the crime to mental illness. "I'm not a psychiatrist," says an agent of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), who agreed to speak on condition of anonymity, "but it looks to me as if the guy was a pyromaniac. The church just happened to be on his way home. It could have been anything that burned. It wasn't racially motivated." Millard D. Mackey, the state deputy fire marshal, agrees. "This was just the case of a sick individual who is now getting help," he says. Despite this alleged history of burnings and mental illness, the suspect was never reported or arrested for any other fires.

Nothing, however, disturbs parishioners of burned churches more than the fact that local authorities have so far been unwilling to investigate white hate groups like the Klan or the Aryan Faction, whose members have been responsible for burning black churches in Tennessee and South Carolina. According to FBI spokesman Hal Nielson in the Jackson office, there is no systematic investigation of white hate groups in the area to determine if they have any connection with the arsons in Mississippi. "It would not be fair to say that we should go out and question members of these groups every time a church is burned in the area," Nielson says. Authorities had no such qualms about questioning the congregations.

Journalist Pam Berry was shot by a neo-Nazi sniper in Jackson this April.



Southern hospitality still has a dark side.

Former Cointelpro agent James Ingram heads Mississippi's church-fire investigation.

Consider the case of St. Paul Primitive Baptist Church in Lauderdale, Miss., about 90 miles east of

Jackson. All that remains of the church is an empty lot and a rusting gas tank. "Here's where the steps used to be," says Johnny McDonald, the 27-year-old minister of St. Paul, pointing to a spot on the ground. As he walks across the sandy open space that was once home to a small wooden church set just off the road in a wooded area, McDonald recalls the Easter Sunday when his church went up in flames. Services had just ended, and members were heading home when they received news of the fire. Most of the contents of the church were destroyed, with only charred walls left standing. Because of the rash of similar fires in other states, agents from local, state, and federal law-enforcement agencies were alerted.

At first, investigators labeled the fire an arson. But after learning that Walter Lloyd, a deacon who sometimes smoked, had been the last to leave the church that day, they ruled the fire an accident. According to the ATF, Lloyd admitted during an interview to inadvertently throwing a cigarette against a church wall, thereby starting the blaze, despite the fact that the walls were the only part of St. Paul Primitive Baptist Church left standing.

Parishioners tell a different story. According to them, Lloyd says he wasn't even smoking the day of the fire. Furthermore, they say they find it hard to believe that the church could be consumed in less than an hour by a cigarette butt. "I don't know of any cigarette that can burn a building that fast," says Willie Burton, assistant pastor at St. Paul. Burton and others who spoke with Lloyd say that the deacon allegedly confessed while being interrogated by agents from the FBI and ATF. While one agent questioned Lloyd about the fire, another yelled scripture at him in what Lloyd characterized as an intimidating manner. When Lloyd broke down and cried during the interrogation, authorities allegedly took his tears as an admission of guilt. The case was closed and ruled an accident, despite the fact that a second fire occurred at the church two days after the first one, this time destroying the structure completely.

Rebuilding begins at Central Grove Baptist Church, though no suspects have been arrested.

"Church fires don't happen in a vacuum," says Obie Clark of the Lauderdale County branch of the NAACP. "The church fires happening here in Mississippi are the result of the same old racism that permeated the state in the 1950s and '60s. To understand the church fires you have to understand the climate, you have to understand Mississippi."

Much has changed in Mississippi since the world's attention was focused on the state in 1964 after Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman were murdered. They came to Mississippi to investigate, of all things, a church burning. (During their investigation, Schwerner and Goodman were actually *charged* with the arson of Mt. Zion Methodist Church, while Chaney was charged with a traffic violation. Shortly after their release, all three were found with gunshot wounds to the head.) Now Mississippi leads the nation in the number of black elected officials (largely because its population is 35 percent black). The state has a black congressman, and a large number of black-owned businesses. Yet, in many ways, things remain the same. Despite their newfound political power, African-Americans are still far worse off economically than their white counterparts, and racism remains a volatile issue.

Only last year did Mississippi ratify the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery—over 131 years after the amendment was ratified by other states. In 1987 voters in Neshoba County refused to overturn a provision in the state constitution that prevents interracial marriages. And just before the recent rash of church burnings began in 1990, a series of mysterious jail hangings occurred. Most of the victims were young black men who were arrested for traffic violations and supposedly committed suicide while in custody. More than 40 people were found hanged in six years. After a federal investigation began, the hangings stopped, and the investigation was never completed. "I can't help but suspect that the same motivation or racial hate that caused us to have jail hangings has shifted now to black churches," says the NAACP's Clark.

In addition, the political climate remains very much the same. When Governor Kirk Fordice first took office in 1991, he pledged to call out the National Guard before he'd implement the decision resulting from *Ayers vs. Fordice*, a federal lawsuit filed in 1975 by black students and parents. The settlement requires the state to provide equal funding for historically black and predominantly white colleges. In 1992 the governor also vetoed a hate crimes bill that would have given victims the right to sue for punitive damages and directed the state to gather data on hate crimes. "The governor feels that the bill would punish thought," said an official spokesperson. "The bill didn't punish thought," countered State Representative Ed Blackmon, who is, in fact, a black man. "It punishes people who act on those thoughts in a violent manner." Be that as it may, there weren't enough votes to override the governor's veto.

For 26-year-old journalist Pamela Berry, Governor Fordice's actions have triggered an intensified atmosphere of racial hatred in Mississippi. On April 12, 1996, Berry, the police reporter for the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, Mississippi's largest newspaper, believes she became a victim of this atmosphere. Berry and seven other African-Americans were wounded, one fatally, by a sniper with a high-powered rifle holed up in an abandoned Po' Folks restaurant. Berry was shot in the neck. If the bullet had entered a bit lower, it would have killed her. The sniper was 59-year-old Larry Wayne Shoemake, a former military man and an avowed white supremacist with a long history of shooting at blacks. Despite repeated complaints from blacks about Shoemake, he had never been arrested. He killed himself after that last shooting spree. At Shoemake's house, police found notes regarding an impending "race war" to purge blacks from the U.S., a Confederate flag, a Nazi flag draped over his bed, and a copy of *Mein Kampf*.

"I think this never goes away in Mississippi, it just goes under the covers," says Berry. "But right now, it's coming out, and they are taking aim at black churches in particular. Anybody in the South knows that the strength of the black community is our churches. When they start to burn our churches, they're trying to take away our strength."

On June 30, 1996, only an hour before Sunday services were to begin outside Kossuth, a tiny Mississippi hamlet of 250 near the Tennessee border, black and white volunteers were still putting the final touches on a tentlike church. The 3,000-square-foot structure was donated by AmeriCares, a Connecticut-based organization that has raised millions of dollars to help rebuild black churches, to temporarily replace the Central Grove Baptist Church, which had been burned to the ground on June 17. Central Grove was torched within 17 minutes of the nearby Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, which had served its congregation since 1887.

Undaunted by the sweltering southern sun, Perry Carrol, the minister of Central Grove, placed a simple wooden cross above the entrance to the congregation's new home. He gave thanks and declared the "outpouring of concern a genuine miracle." Soothing hymns and fiery sermons bounced off the ceiling of the prefab temple. The congregation of about 30 swayed in the sultry air, moved by their preacher's call for forgiveness and prayers for the perpetrators. "Out of this whole situation, I have never been angry," he said after the service ended, "but sad from the first night I looked at the fire. I still grieve a little...for our children standing there watching the fire and not knowing what was really going on."

While many in the congregation are willing to forgive, they are still shaken by the burning and troubled that nobody has been apprehended and that leads are sparse. Only two weeks earlier, many of these same parishioners had watched with tears filling their eyes, uttering prayers as volunteer firefighters fought a losing battle against the flames. It seems "extremely suspicious" to Sheriff Jimmy Taylor that two neighboring churches with black congregations would burn almost simultaneously. Arson is suspected, says the sheriff, but an arrest doesn't seem imminent.

Back at his office, Public Safety Commissioner Ingram doesn't seem to share the sheriff's suspicions that the double burning was an expression of race hatred. "We're going to find a copycat situation—someone who just couldn't help themselves," he says. "These are random acts of violence. It is not a conspiracy. Mississippi is not burning."

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ABOVE THE LAW

Real black supermen

All those groups talking about the struggle in New York should stay real with the playas out West," says Above the Law's lead MC and primary producer, Don "Hutch" Hutchison. "We're saying what their reality is, in our language. We feel what they feel."

Above the Law—Hutch (a.k.a. Cold 187um), Kevin "KMG" Gulley, and Anthony "K-oss" Stewart—blend the despondency, shit-talking, and ghetto optimism that make for righteous gangsta tracks. And Hutch's recipe of bass guitars and serene pianos is no accident—his father, Richard Hutch, is a former Motown songwriter, and his uncle, Willie Hutch, worked for the Temptations, penned the Jackson 5's 1970 classic "I'll Be There," and recorded the soundtrack for 1973's *The Mack*.

On this overcast L.A. day, the crew are crowded into Hutch's sister's Inglewood, Calif. apartment. While KMG chomps on an ice cream cone, Hutch recounts the dramas ATL endured at Ruthless Records before leaving for Tommy Boy Records last year. He says there were many personnel issues at Ruthless in the aftermath of Eazy-E's 1995 death. "Head people were having beef with each other about [ATL]—we should have been reaping more for our music." ATL's 1990 debut, *Livin' Like Hustlers*, was a shoot-'em-up collection with class, while images of a million black Tony Montanas saturated 1992's *Black Mafia Life*. 1994's *Uncle Sam's Curse* depicted a black America held captive in a mental and physical prison. But while ATL have always sold a solid 400,000 units, they've never had a gold album or single. "How does a group chart Top 10 R&B the first week, *every time* they come out, but never get to that [gold] point?" Hutch asks. "There's a flaw, and it ain't us."

ATL's new, choice *Time Will Reveal* combines tales of weed smoking ("Endonesia") with the introspection of songs like "Evil Men Do"—the formula that's worked for them before. They have high—indeed, golden—hopes for *Time*, and they have faith that the proper things lie ahead.

"This is the *real* motherfucking world," Hutch says in the album's prayerful introduction. "And on my Judgment Day, the good Lord is gon' take care of me for my misgivings as well as my good deeds." True, that.

Frank "P-Frank" Williams

From left: KMG, Hutch, K-oss

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEAN KARR

NOTHING ELSE
IS A PEPSI

TEARS OF TE

The Harlem Globetrotters were once the most famous team in the world. Now their new owner wants to restore the clown princes of basketball to their former glory—with a different script. But in the age of Michael, Worm, and Penny, does anybody care? *By Josh Tyrangiel. Photographs by Lois Greenfield*

The Harlem Globetrotters are dressing in the boys' locker room at Danville High School in Danville, Pa. (population 5,392) on a frigid March evening. A high school gym smack in the frozen heart of the Keystone State isn't where you imagine meeting the team that, at one time, was the most famous in the world. Like many, I grew up watching the Trotters on *Wide World of Sports*: baldheaded Fred "Curly" Neal dazzling weary defenders with his acrobatic dribbling, "Sweet" Lou Dunbar sinking that high-arcing half-court hook, and the most celebrated Trotter of all, George "Meadowlark" Lemon, playfully taunting bewildered referees, hiding the ball in his jersey, and throwing a bucket of confetti on courtside fans. They took up more space in my generation's sports consciousness than their generic pre–Magic, Larry, and David Stern NBA counterparts. Perhaps it's memory's tricks, but those teams seemed like the world's greatest, and even though the routines were the

HE CLOWNS

New-age Globies (from left) Derrick "D.C." Canada, Paul "Showtime" Gaffney, Arnold "A Train" Bernard

"This joke of us never being defeated in 8,000 games—give me a break, our players know that if we were going to be winning every game, let's

same night after night, year after year, the laughter was always real.

Things have changed, though. And times. In the '90s, the Globetrotters seem pretty irrelevant. But the 70-year-old franchise has a new owner, former Globetrotter Mannie Jackson, who, after enduring a long parade of lackluster performers, has recruited a crop of ex-college players who possess decent hoop skills and on-court charisma. As a group, though, they've got a lot to learn.

"VIBE magazine!" says Paul "Showtime" Gaffney, shaking my hand like a tambourine. "You gonna make me famous?"

The 28-year-old, six-foot-six Paul has been chosen as the new "clown prince of basketball," a heady title considering the distinction of the men who've come before him: Reece "Goose" Tatum, Meadowlark, Dunbar, and current Globetrotter head coach Hubert "Geese" Ausbie. "Do I have what it takes to be on the cover?" asks Paul, mugging for an invisible camera somewhere over my right shoulder, his voice bouncing off the locker room walls. The team's management has placed its most trusted legacy in Paul's bear-paw hands for a reason: He's got instant star quality. He's naturally funny, as down-to-earth as your chatty Aunt Esther, and his smile and Kentucky drawl remind me of Magic Johnson's country cousin.

While Paul jabbers on like sportscaster Bill Walton after a blown layup, the other players loosen up by bouncing balls on the tile floor: "Curley" Boo Johnson and Reggie "Silky" Perkins, soft-spoken but outgoing veterans who perform the dribbling routines created by Globie legends Marques Haynes and Curly Neal; French-Canadian Pascal "Frenchy" Fleury, the tallest Trotter ever at seven foot three; imposing Shawn "Thunderbird" Jamison and wiry Trazel "Quick" Silvers, two rookies learning the ropes.

With game time approaching, I head out to the floor and take my seat behind the bench. The stands are packed with 2,200 entertainment-starved Danvillians. Quite a change from two weeks ago, when the team played under the championship banners of the New York Knicks in a two-thirds-filled Madison Square Garden. Tonight, they're surrounded by the purple and orange of the Danville Ironmen, whose Arm and Hammer-inspired insignia is emblazoned on the crash mats hanging on the walls behind each basket.

I'm sitting right behind coach Geese Ausbie. I introduce myself cordially, but Geese scowls at me with a deep-seated menace that would make Pat Riley envious. After holding the stare for a few seconds, a broad smile stretches across his face. During player introductions, Geese works me into the act. As the PA announcer brings out the team, Geese fakes sleep until his name is called. When he "wakes up," he jumps with a start and swats me with a towel. His clowning is on a different level than Paul's. Geese is like Carol Channing as Dolly or Yul Brynner as the King: Who he is and the role he's playing are so conflated there's no longer space between them.

Globetrotter basketball in 1996 is competent if not thrilling. They still do the magic circle to "Sweet Georgia Brown" before every game. The first few minutes of each 10-minute quarter are played straight until a lead is established. Then they slip into familiar routines that, frankly, seem a bit stale. The confetti water bucket is still in effect, as is the ball-on-a-string gag. Paul, who wears a live microphone throughout the game, terrorizes the new permanent opposition, the International All-Stars (the Washington Generals were put out of their misery last year), by grabbing their butts at the foul line, teasing them about smelly armpits, and mocking their physical stature. Paul also spends time in the crowd, dancing to the 69 Boyz with a lady who's a dead ringer for Newt Gingrich's mom and coaxing kisses out of a woman who can't decide whether to tongue him or run for her life. His biggest laugh of the night comes when he hikes up his shorts and does an Urkel impression.

The script feels like it hasn't changed much since the old days, but the crowd here doesn't seem to notice. In fact, they actually have to be pushed back when the 15-minute autograph session begins after the game. Paul is the most in demand, and while he's signing shirts and balls, he looks over, sweat-drenched and exhausted, and mouths the words "I'm tired."

The Globetrotters were founded in 1926 in Chicago by a 24-year-old Polish Jew named Abe Saperstein. Originally called the Savoy Big 5 after a famed Chicago dancehall, Saperstein changed the name to the Harlem Globetrotters to emphasize that his players were black in an age when blacks were banned from all major professional sports. The Trotters played competitive basketball into the '30s, but one night, in the process of pummeling an opponent 112–5, Saperstein's players started messing around. The crowd went wild, and Saperstein, more P.T. Barnum than Red Auerbach, went along with it.

Over the next five decades, the Globetrotters became the most famous franchise in sports. At one point, as many as seven barnstorming squads filled arenas throughout the country (currently there are two sets of touring Trotters). Peruvians halted a civil war to see them play in 1956. They were granted private audiences with popes, packed soccer stadiums in Brazil and Germany, and reached the pinnacle of American celebrity in the '70s when they starred in a Saturday morning cartoon and a prime-time variety show, *The Harlem Globetrotters Popcorn Machine*.

As entertainment contemporaries of James Brown and Flip Wilson, the Trotters brought their act off as good-natured playfulness. But as black athletes led by Jim Brown, Muhammad Ali, and John Carlos became more outspoken on race issues, and the formation of the American Basketball Association led to escalating salaries, the relationship of fans to their sports heroes changed. Suddenly, the Globetrotters began to look a little minstrel-y.

In 1978 crowd favorite Meadowlark defected and formed his own team, the Bucketeers, stealing several Trotters and dividing the loyalty of longtime supporters. Then, in 1979, Larry Bird and Magic Johnson mesmerized a record TV audience in the NCAA championship, and a new generation of fans followed them to the NBA. Who needed the Globies when you could see Magic's flamboyant no-look passes, Bird's comic humiliation of opponents, and Julius Erving's soaring aeronautics during the course of genuine, high-level competition? In 1981, in a move designed to regain some prime-time props, the team joined forces with another pathetic relic to make the TV movie *The Harlem Globetrotters on Gilligan's Island*.

While the Globetrotters continued to be profitable, the team suffered what Mannie Jackson delicately calls an "artistic decline." "It was like going to see the Los Angeles Clippers play," says Jackson, a 56-year-old former *Fortune* 500 executive who bought the Trotters in 1993, making him the first black owner of a major sports franchise. "It looks like professional basketball, but there's something underneath that's not there."

Jackson doesn't elaborate on what was missing, but he's tried to inject spirit into the team by taking risks. Last year, he signed the team's first Latino player, Orlando Antigua, a schoolboy prodigy from the Bronx who had a solid career in the Big East for Pitt. The most highly publicized move was an experiment last fall dubbed the Ultimate Challenge Tour. Jackson sent his troops across Europe in a shtick-free 11-game series against a squad of aging but respectable former NBA players led by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. After winning the first two games, the Globetrotters lost to Kareem's team 91–85 in Vienna, ending their 8,829-game "winning streak."

"This joke of us never being defeated in 8,000 games—give me a break," says Jackson in his gentle boardroom voice. "That's not relevant to anything. I wanted to benchmark ourselves against basketball standards, and let our players know that if we were going to be winning every game, let's declare that we're an exhibition team and the games are fixed, because nobody thinks that's real." The Trotters ultimately took 10 of 11 from Kareem and company, a success that has provoked Jackson to consider an annual competitive series to bolster his team's image.

Following a six-hour bus ride from Danville, the team arrives at the Landover, Md. Holiday Inn at 3:00 a.m. Saturday with a doubleheader looming. Game one is an afternoon affair at the Patriot Center in Fairfax, Va., followed by a night game at the USAir Arena in Landover. But after a quick sleep, no one feels up to the task.

Before the Fairfax game, "Curley" Boo Johnson gets himself together by practicing his dribbling routine. "See this?" he says, pointing to a scar that starts on his calf and disappears into his shorts. "In Russia, the floor had a nail in it, and I got a cut from the middle of my leg up to my butt." He also has scar tissue around his knees from dribbling on them every day. "I never miss games, though. When people are out there, it's time to perform. I'm always ready."

On the shiny hardwood and with 9,000 people in the stands, the Globetrotters are crisp today. Paul is especially on. Again, Urkel gets a big laugh. Paul's also playing a little ball—something, he'll let you know, that he does pretty well. In his first minute in the game, he grabs an offensive rebound, hits a jumper, blocks a shot, and gets a steal. "I'm not just a showman," he says. "I got skills."

Like most of his teammates, Paul was a solid college player, averaging 20 points and 11 boards at Division II Tennessee Wesleyan in 1990. Lacking the tools to play in Europe or the CBA, he was invited to try out for the Globies, who liked his game and his flamboyance. With little idea of what he was getting into but a strong desire to keep playing basketball, Paul survived training camp and made the team.

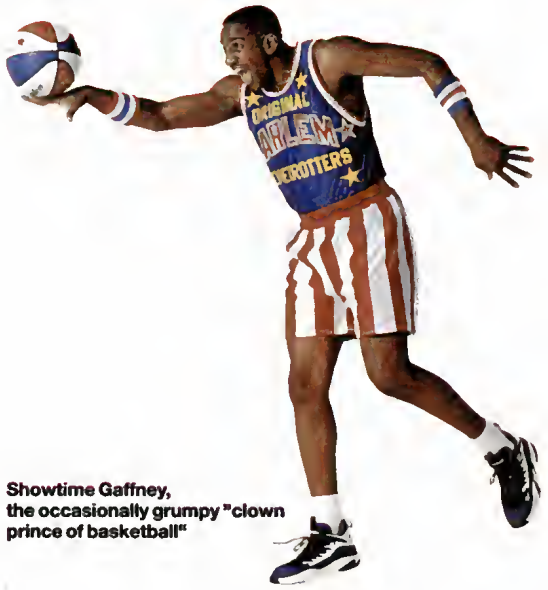
With the attention he commands from teammates and fans alike, Paul is potentially capable of blazing a glorious new trail for the Globetrotters. "He has so much talent," says Geese Ausbie in a rare serious moment. "He's a natural, and there's nothing keeping him from being as good a showman as there ever was." Yet Ausbie knows there's another side to Paul; there are moments when the mask comes off, and his impatience with something as minor as an uncooperative kid can put an indelible scowl on the clown's face. After one game, someone screams for "the funny one" to sign autographs and Paul complains audibly that "they don't even know my name." Geese is too polite to comment on these transgressions of etiquette.

"The only issue with Paul now," says Jackson, "is mentally, how far his mind will let him go in terms of exploring the depth of this entertainment vehicle. If he doesn't let his mind get in the way of it, I think he has a tremendous future. There's no more we can train him on, though."

I ask Paul if the Globetrotters' frivolity is at odds with the keep-it-real crews, who scorn anything that suggests gleeful black pandering. "That must be particularly hard on a clown prince," I say. But Paul ducks the issue. "I know I still have a lot to learn to get to where Geese is," he finally responds. "But it's not anxiety about race or history or anything. I love being a Globetrotter. It's just that I'm young, we're young. It's gonna take some time."

Between games, the team stops for lunch at a roadside diner, and Curley and Reggie Perkins get to gossiping about various team members. Not even Globie, the team's ill-conceived globe-shaped mascot experiment, is spared.

says Mannie Jackson. "That's not relevant to anything. I wanted to let declare that the games are fixed, because nobody thinks that's real."



Showtime Gaffney, the occasionally grumpy "clown prince of basketball"

Eventually the conversation winds around to Thunderbird Jamison, the Clippers' final cut last fall, who was signed as part of Jackson's effort to make the Globetrotters competitive. While Thunderbird is the best player on the team, he's hardly the most popular. He's got powerful low-post moves and his dunks sound like cannon shots. (I personally inspected a palm print he left a foot above the rim.) But Thunderbird is unenthusiastic when called on to participate in routines, and his teammates complain about his shot selection (there's not a shot he won't take).

On the bus to Landover, the mood is dreary. The weather is frigid and everyone seems worn out. This weekend—four games in three states in less than 48 hours—is the worst stretch of the current tour, during which they'll play 92 games in 96 nights in 91 cities. The players watch a tape of the 1992 Dream Team. After Charles Barkley receives a fancy pass from Magic and throws down a gruesome dunk, the announcer says, "Sometimes when you see them, you can hear the song 'Sweet Georgia Brown' in the background." The bus is silent.

Dressing for the evening game, 42-year-old Billy Ray "Supertrotter" Hobley pontificates on his favorite subject: the code of the Trotters. "When you look at true team basketball, the kind that all the great NBA teams play, they're playing Globetrotter ball. The NBA learned that from us. The team goal is first and only. That's the code."

Billy Ray, who splits time as a player and assistant coach, is the last old head still on the team, and the Globetrotters are in his bones. He can recall specific times when he, Geese, and Curly Neal would play cat-and-mouse with a defender without letting the ball touch the floor. He also loves the nobility of his particular entertainment mission. As he describes it, it's not subservience to the ticket buyer, but a kind of dignified butlery, being constantly solicitous of the fans' needs. "If they want basketball, we give them world-class basketball," he says, leaning back in his bus seat. "But if they want to laugh, we know hundreds of ways to bust 'em up."

While Billy Ray's experience is a welcome commodity on a young team, his outlook may not be. "Billy Ray and them who got caught up in that old label think they're out there [solely] to clown," says Mannie Jackson firmly. "We're not clowns. These are people with unusual skills cast in a situation comedy where their skills complement the situation to make it humorous. Look at Bill Cosby—you wouldn't say his casts were clowns. They were just put in a situation where their acting skills contribute to humor. I don't have any clowns out there. I send clowns home."

Today there's an afternoon game in Roanoke, Va. But everyone's mind is on tomorrow, when the team gets a day off as the bus heads into the Deep South. They all look forward to the long hours of sleep en route.

This game is like the others: lots of families in the stands, laughter in spots, a generally happy vibe. But the team has been better. There are muffed show plays and some tension as Thunderbird continues to fire up shots. Paul, who's playing with an assortment of injuries, is low on energy and is just trying to get through the game. Geese, however, keeps the show alive, screaming with mock outrage at the refs and yelling "Kill it, son!" before every dunk. His voice fills the arena, and he's not even wearing a mike.

Curly Neal (left) and Meadowlark Lemon horsing around, 1965

Mannie Jackson, the first black owner of a major sports franchise

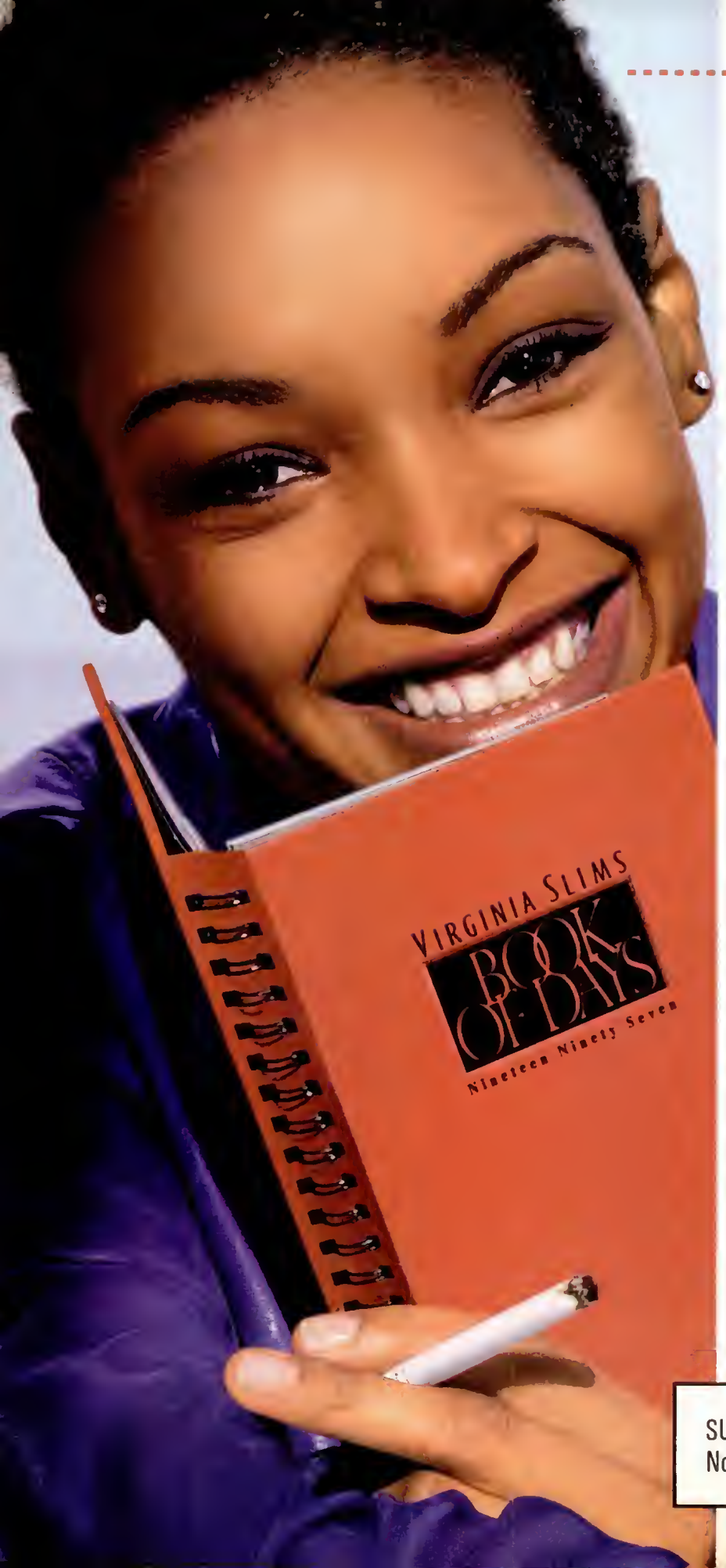
Geese makes it look easy. Like any gifted actor, he never questions whether the audience is buying it—he *makes* them believe. The same was true for all the Trotter greats. They had larger-than-life personalities; their on-court personae were merely extensions of themselves. Dancing as he set his man up for a crossover, Curly Neal's crooked smile and shiny head seemed to cut across the divide to say, "Forget about the show for a second and watch *this*!" "Curley" Boo Johnson—who's been called Boo all his life but was force-fed "Curley" by management when he joined the team—knows he is doing an impersonation. "How am I supposed to distinguish myself?" he asks. "The marketing people even asked me if I would shave my head."

For all their renewed promotional prowess, the Globetrotters are at a crossroads. By their own admission, those like Shawn Jamison want to play competitive ball and would much rather be in the NBA, or even the CBA. Dedicated pros like Reggie Perkins, Mario Green, and Trazel Silvers make up the majority of the squad. They watched the Globetrotters as kids and experienced the fun those teams supplied in their prime—which is both an inspiration and a burden. Like their elders, these guys take the mission seriously, play team ball, and put on a good show. But they don't bleed the red, white, and blue, because the constant smiles and corny nicknames are out of step with their modern reality. Finally, there's "Curley" Boo Johnson and Billy Ray Hobley, hoop-playing Willy Lomans who love the barnstorming and place equal value on showmanship, teamwork, and shooting. For them, the Globies are a way of life, and they'll carry the torch till death.

Mannie Jackson seems on the scent of a solution. Clowning may still draw the family crowd, but it won't return the Globetrotters to proud icon status. But getting more competitive isn't the answer, either. If people want to see a team so good that they can pass with their butts and still win, well, there's always the Dream Team. The Globetrotters can still offer something, though. If they can find more Pauls—skillful, funny players respectful of the legacy but living in the present—and forget about the sitcom, then they may have something unique: a mix of improv and basketball that stays true to the mission but doesn't get smothered by it. Throw out most of the familiar script, though, because comedy is about timing, and the time is 1996.

With eight minutes left in the Roanoke game, I head to the airport with Paul, Pascal, and Reggie, who must leave early in order to shoot a SportsCenter commercial for ESPN. They won't get to enjoy the day off. Reggie, aware the team was not at its best, begins to criticize its performance. He's hard on himself, and a little unhappy with the Globies' overall level of concentration.

Reggie's critique trails off, as if he suddenly remembered that the world doesn't rest on the outcome of a Globetrotters game. As we pull up to the terminal, he shrugs his shoulders, sighs, and says, "Overall, we gave them what they wanted." ■



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OUTKAST

Home on the Range

In the backyard of Big Boi's new, sparkling white house, five cages house purebred pit bulls. They're mostly puppies—more adorable than frightening. A pup named Sub-Zero is Big Boi's favorite.

Andre, the other half of OutKast, is inside, watching the '80s television show *V* on a big screen. Big Boi's tri-level crib is in a suburban of East Point, Ga., and the duo's kinfolk are everywhere, eating, laughing, and relaxing—Fourth of July–style. "This day," Andre says, "has always meant family, barbecue, and potato salad—basically getting your eat on."

OutKast may be cooling at the moment, but this month, *ATLiens*, their second album, hits the tape decks, earphones, and CD changers of the entire Hip Hop Nation. And Big Boi and Andre have spent a year making sure that the sophomore jinx is nothing but superstition. "A dope album is one you listen to without skipping forward or winding through anything," says Big Boi. "That's what this album is. We had like 35 songs, and the album's got 14 tracks. We picked the *best* ones."

Along with an assist from the ever-skillful Organized Noize (who produced OutKast's platinum 1994 debut, *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*), Big Boi and Andre's success can be credited to their ferocious lyrical abilities. Like most good art, though, their songs are rarely planned. "Stuff'll just come to you," Big Boi says. "I'll be sittin' in the truck, and I'll start rhymin'. People look at me like I'm crazy, but that's how it starts."

The first single from *ATLiens*, "Elevators (Me and You)," chronicles OutKast's rise. Those days—and the emotions that went with them—remain close to Big Boi and Andre's hearts. "I remember a show we did at Howard University," says Andre, "when 'Player's Ball' first came out. Puffy Combs and a bunch of other people were there, we were away from home, and we were nervous—but we got through it."

Big Boi says things are different these days: "Now we go out, rock the crowd, and give the people what they want." He surveys the southern cooking, family, and love he sees at his home; Big Boi even has a brand new lawn mower. "Yeah," he says. "Now we can bust a verse, and then come back here and chill."

Kenji Jasper

Big Boi, Andre

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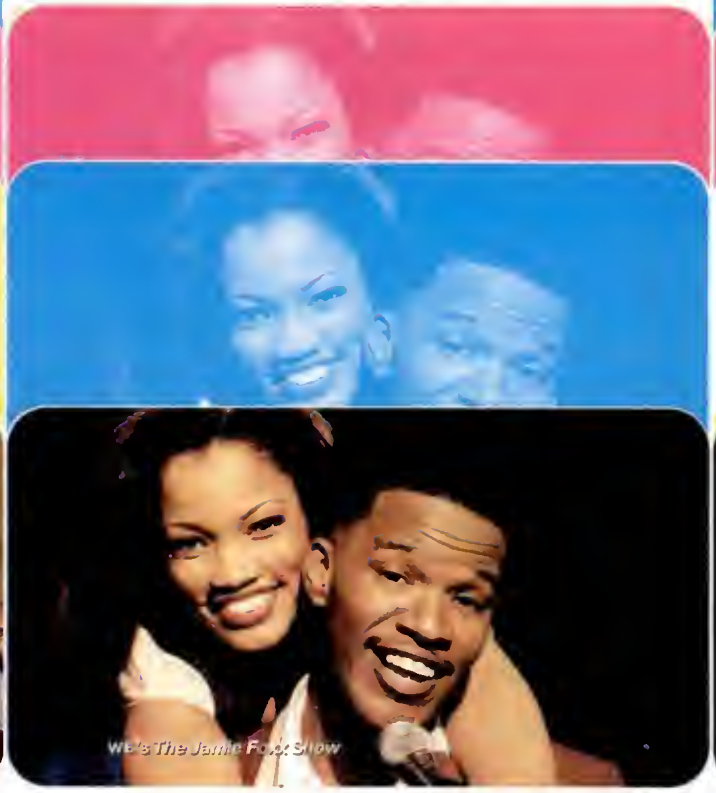
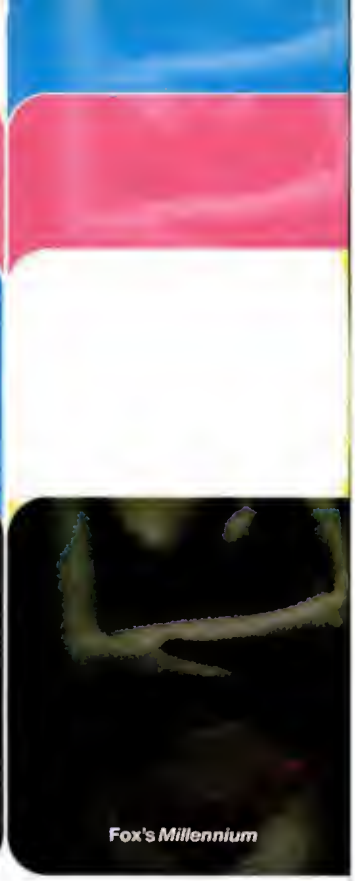
ABC's Dangerous Minds


WB's The Jamie Foxx Show


Fox's *Millennium*

REMOTE C

Breaking down the new fall TV

Unlike last year's invasion of the *Friends* clones, the new fall television lineup isn't so easy to categorize. There are, however, two things we can say for sure: Envious stars are grumbling about Will Smith's big movie break, and the major networks' ethnic-cleansing campaign continues. Fox led the purge when it axed most of its black-oriented shows a few seasons back, and if you look around the Big Four this September, the only heavy hitter you'll find is CBS's ***Cosby***. And we've all seen that before.

Upstarts UPN and WB are picking up the slack, stuffing our empty stockings with seven new black shows. Giddy with the success of Brandy's *Moesha* (which CBS passed on), UPN's revamped Monday night kicks off with L.L. Cool J's ***In the House*** (booted from NBC) and picks up speed with ***Malcolm & Eddie***, in which Malcolm-Jamal Warner and stand-up comic Eddie Griffin play two slacker roommates in Kansas City. As superfreak to Warner's straight man, Griffin's mumbling, tow-truck–driving Eddie is a manic delight, and he shifts gears between physical comedy and addled one-liners with aplomb. ***Goode Behavior*** follows, noteworthy for Sherman Hemsley's return to the tube. This time, Mr. Jefferson is a con man sentenced to house arrest for insider trading. Twenty years ago, he'd probably have been doing time for boosting stereos, like the father on *What's Happening!!*, so perhaps we should take this as progress.

Next up is ***Sparks***, set in a low-rent law firm in L.A., and featuring James Avery (Will Smith's tacitum uncle on *The Fresh Prince*) and Robin "Look what Mike gave me" Givens. The debut episode is auspicious, thanks to a healthy mix of bizarre clients and ambulance-chasing litigators—the firm keeps a storeroom full of snap-on body casts, just in case. The title of UPN's final new show, ***Homeboys in Outer Space***, says it all. Ty (played by comedian Flex) and Morris (Darryl M. Vell) are two pals who soar the stars in their "space hoopty," guided by a back-talking computer named Loquatia. It's the Wayans brothers with warp drive.

Speaking of buffoons, the Wayanses are joined on WB by two new comedian vehicles, ***The Jamie Foxx Show*** and ***The Steve Harvey Show***. Not surprisingly, the fresh arrivals merely rehash tired sitcom formulas. Foxx's foray finds him helping out in his aunt's failing hotel. While Garrett Morris seems suspiciously at home as Foxx's compulsive-gambling uncle, Foxx doesn't live up to his inspired work on *In Living Color* or last spring's *The Great White Hype*. As for Steve Harvey, his appeal has always been hard to fathom, and there's no more depleted a premise than that of a wisecracking, kindhearted teacher. This season alone, there are four new teacher shows, including ABC's ***Dangerous Minds***. Starring *Designing Women*'s Annie Potts, it does a surprisingly good job of critiquing the film's missionary-in-the-jungle theme.

Needless to say, these new sitcoms blossom at the

expense of black drama, which the networks continue to resist. But that doesn't mean there's nothing worth checking for. Though there aren't any new ensemble series like *ER* or *Homicide*, there are some sinister dramas, thanks to *The X-Files*' success. From *X-Files* creator Chris Carter comes Fox's ***Millennium***, in which a former FBI agent (Lance Henrickson) tries to stave off the apocalypse, scheduled to occur at century's end. As clever as it is grim—in the first episode, a serial killer recites Yeats, Nostradamus, and the Book of Revelations to his victims—*Millennium* complements, but doesn't plagiarize, *The X-Files*' eerie, malevolent world. NBC jumps on the paranormal bandwagon with ***Dark Skies***, which ties historical events of the past 30 years to a secret alien invasion. Turns out J.F.K. was killed because he knew too much about little green men—so the CIA and Mafia are off the hook. No word yet on alien responsibility for Jimmie Walker's disappearance.

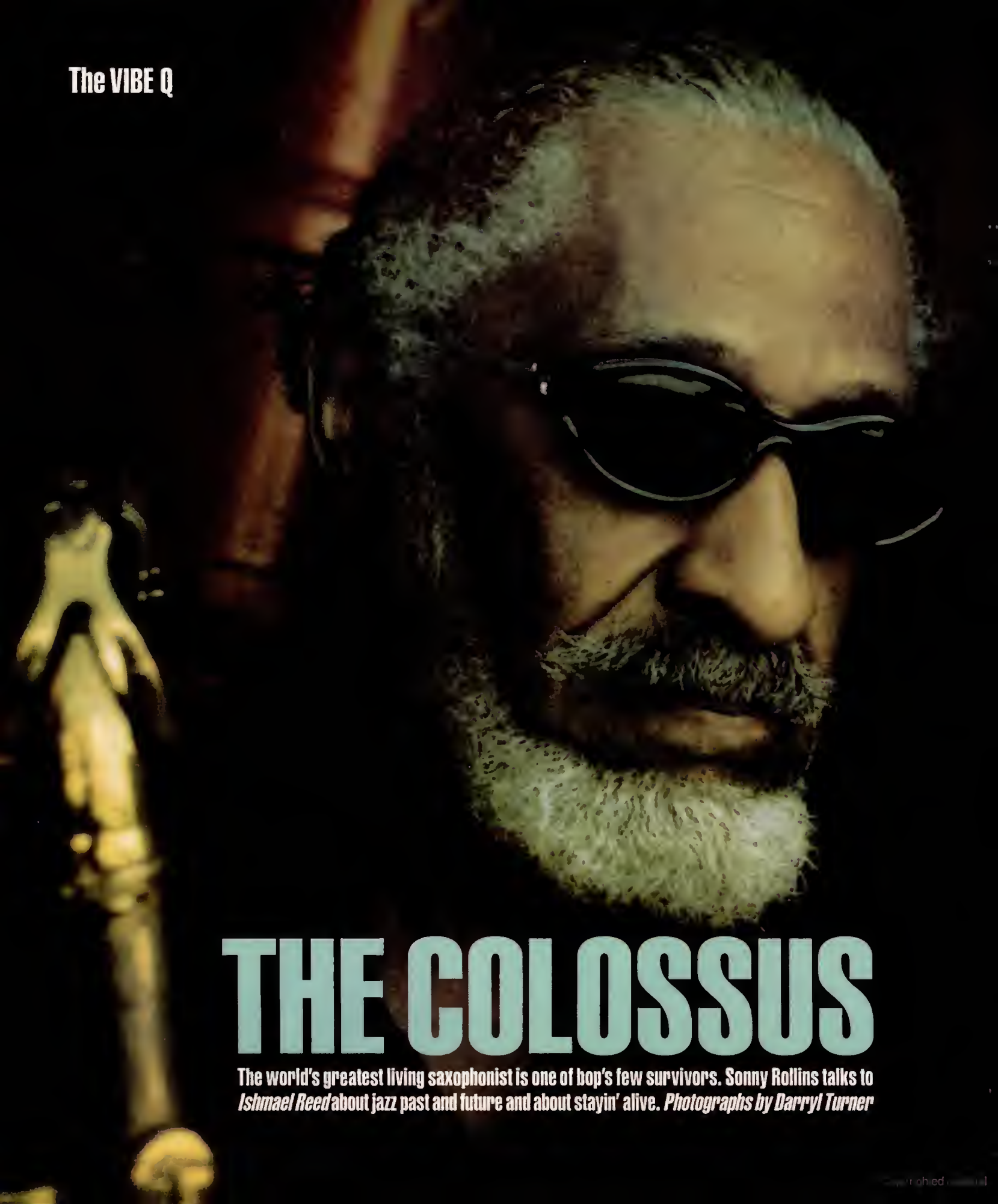
Barring an impromptu Mothership Connection, though, don't expect too many colored folks on these two shows. You'll have to look to a series such as CBS's ***EZ Streets***, where studied integration is the networks' concession to African-American viewers, à la *Dangerous Minds*. The most intriguing new show of the season unfolds in a fictional Everycity where corruption is as essential to daily life as water or electricity. The show details an undercover cop's infiltration of the city's crime syndicates, whose venomous influence extends to its seemingly upright black mayor (Carl Lumbly). Remarkably well written, *EZ* ably juggles urban realism and extreme melancholy.

The new wave of not-so-daring diversity is particularly conspicuous in Sitcom Land. ABC and Fox have adapted ***Clueless*** and ***Party Girl***, respectively, in an attempt to cash in on hip multicultural bonhomie, but both misplace the charms of the big-screen originals. *Party Girl*, starring Christine Taylor, who played Marcia in *The Brady Bunch Movie*, is particularly frightening: Taylor's resemblance to the original Marcia is so unsettling that it looks like the eldest Brady daughter quantum-leaped through time and discovered jungle music. Karyn Parsons, another *Fresh Prince* alum snatched off the unemployment line, plays a young divorcée who moves in with her sex-starved buddy (Lori Petty) in Fox's lightweight but entertaining ***Lush Life***. Parsons's character is biracial, but the show declines to mention it; we see her white mom and have to fill in the rest.

As if to counteract all this multiculti high-fiving, there are ample signs of a growing PC backlash. NBC's ***Men Behaving Badly*** features two nut-scratching, Caucasoid roommates who use dirty undies as coffee filters. And CBS's ***Public Morals***, set in a New York City vice squad headquarters, finds the sole black character getting mocked by coworkers for his stiff "white" speech and uptight manner. Both series are amusing enough but also serve as a clear reminder that the good ol' boys shall not be denied their fun. ■

CONTROL

from By Colson Whitehead



THE COLOSSUS

The world's greatest living saxophonist is one of bop's few survivors. Sonny Rollins talks to *Ishmael Reed* about jazz past and future and about stayin' alive. *Photographs by Darryl Turner*

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Bebop was my generation's hip hop. It was more than a pastime; it was an obsession. I used to play trombone with bebop groups and still play a little bop piano. When I met Max Roach, I thanked him for keeping me out of reform school; we were too busy listening to bop to get into trouble.

Bebop musicians didn't walk. They came at you, dancing. When Sonny Rollins descended from his studio after our interview, he was wearing this great greenish raincoat that hit him near the ankles. Rollins, who turns 66 in September, said that when he was a teenager, he was impressed with the way that an older trumpet player shined his shoes. Beboppers were clean, and we were their acolytes.

Theodore Walter "Sonny" Rollins first picked up the sax in 1944 while only a sophomore in high school. By the 1950s he had come into his own, playing tenor with a variety of jazz's all-time greats, including Art Blakey, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, and Miles Davis. When he left the Max Roach quintet in 1957, he created his own unique trio (sax, bass, and drums) that spotlighted the versatility of his solos and hard bop style. Several years later, in an attempt to regain inspiration in his playing, he stopped recording and began practicing regularly while walking along New York's Williamsburg Bridge, before a triumphant return in 1962 with an album titled simply *The Bridge*.

Rollins's early recordings show him developing what would become the Rollins style: a broad repertoire that included blues, standards, and even spirituals; and an intense devotion to melody, so that no matter how abstract his solos might become,

one is always mindful of the tune with which he started out—a trait he shares with Monk. Though many jazz solos sound as though they're spontaneous, often they are rehearsed and memorized. Some musicians are still recycling solos originated by Charlie "Bird" Parker. Rollins, on the other hand, is known for pure improvisation.

Both the Yoruba and biblical traditions hold that sometimes your worst adversary is inside your family—

ROBERT W. PARENT

Miles and Sonny at the Newport Jazz Festival, 1957

in this case, American fans and critics. The prophet is not honored in his own country. Abroad, though, it's different. Rollins's *Saxophone Colossus* is a best-seller in Japan, which he has visited 19 times, and where he has appeared in computer commercials. But Rollins doesn't have to go anywhere if he doesn't want to. He's come a long way since his mother bought him that first Zephyr tenor. He can kick around his Germantown, N.Y. farm and continue to evolve his music until he reaches his goal: performing on the tenor saxophone in the manner that Art Tatum, whom he reveres, performed on the piano.

Often referred to as "the greatest living saxophonist," Rollins has accumulated a catalog of close to 50 albums. More importantly, he's one of the only surviving icons left from an era in jazz when genius was the norm and musicians like Davis, John Coltrane, and Monk were not only changing music but also affecting black culture and American society.

It's appropriate that the central image associated with Rollins is a bridge, because the beboppers, like the hip hoppers, have established a bridge that reaches back thousands of years to the sound of the mother drum, the root of all black music.

There aren't many survivors from the great bebop revolution. Who is still left?

Well, J.J. Johnson and Max Roach, Milt Jackson, Percy Heath and his little brother, Jimmy. There's not that many of us left. Art Farmer, who I guess would be around my age. Johnny Griffin.

Do you guys have a survivors' guild? [*Laughter*]

No, we don't have one. We should have something like that, 'cause in the old days in Harlem, they used to have all these clubs and everyone would be together, to help guys. There should really be some kind of federation. But people just see each other now and then, you know.

You've said your mind is like a computer—you have different programs and you snatch from everyplace. Tin Pan Alley, country and western—very eclectic. Do you consider your music to be at all political or satirical, like poking fun at institutions that take themselves too seriously?

Yeah, oh sure. Of course. I got a lot of criticism for "The Freedom Suite," especially when I went down South on tour and we were playing mainly white colleges. A lot of people had me against the wall, asking, "What did you mean by that?"

We still get that with gangsta rap, and I remember the horrible things they used to say about bebop. When middle-class black people listened to bebop, they said the music was strange. They didn't like the culture, they didn't like the style; just a lot of hate.

In a way, because of the guys in that day using drugs and stuff, they might have associated the music with that culture. So maybe I can cut them a little bit of slack.

Let's talk about music here. One critic, Gunther Schuller, said that your method of playing, through melody rather than running harmonic changes, was a radical concept. What did he mean by that?

I guess what he's talking about is thematic improvisation. In other words, if I played "Mary Had a Little Lamb," [*Sings the melody*] I might play for two hours from that same song, variations on that theme. What he meant was that I didn't just play the melody of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and go into the chord changes. I kept it as a theme. I think that's what he meant. But at the time that he wrote that, I didn't know what he meant. I might have understood it, but it was so strange to have someone tell me what I was doing that it sort of tricked me for a minute.

Describe your apprenticeship with Coleman Hawkins. I know he influenced you a great deal.

I would say Monk was more like that. Coleman, he was sort of...I didn't really work with him. He was just my adult. But I actually used to go to Monk's house after school and rehearse with his band and stuff, so with him I would say it was more like a real apprenticeship. He was like my guru. Monk would say, "Yeah, man, Sonny is bad. Cats have to work out what they play; Sonny just plays that shit out the top of his head."

In the old days, the players and the gangsters were the real patrons of the art. And if you had talent, they would get you gigs in their clubs. Then a new kind of drug came on the scene. What was the impact of heroin on the jazz scene?

Devastating. Devastating.

When you got in trouble, was that peer group stuff?

To an extent, but you know...Bird was doing it, Billie Holiday was doing it, but especially Bird. That's why Bird was such a distraught figure. Because cats were copying him, and he knew it was wrong but he couldn't stop himself. So we figured, Yeah, man, Bird is doing it, let's go and get high. And I got strung out. I got fucked-up. I mean, that's normal when you don't know better.

But you overcame it.

That was a rough one. The person that gave me pride to overcome it—besides Bird—was my mother, who stood by me after I had nobody. After I had ripped everybody off. People would see me coming down the street, they'd run. But my mother stayed with me all the way. And Charlie Parker.

You had a great reputation, but you went to Chicago and worked as a laborer. How did you feel about that?

Well, I had messed myself up so bad and burned all these bridges, so when I went to Chicago, I went there to kick my habit.

And then you went to the government rehab center in Lexington, Ky. and afterward made your comeback.

I came out and I was thinking about Bird, and what happened when I was in there. I thought, Boy, wait till I come out. I'ma show Bird that I'm cool. And then he died while I was still in there. But anyway, I came out and still had to struggle with cats saying, "Hey, man, come on, let's step out," but I won that struggle. I wanted to work, and I had to come all the way back out myself. I knew how far down I'd been, I did janitor work and all of this—well, what else was there to really do?

What about your relationship with club owners?

I was blackballed by a lot of these people.

Why?

Because I was what you would call an uppity nigger or whatever, so a lot of these cats were keeping me from playing festivals and shit. This was for acting up and asking for money. Some cats be so glad to play that they don't say nothing.

People are so happy to play that they lower the standards.

It's not just in the past, either; I'm going through this shit all the time. They just called me to do a commercial for this car, Infiniti. They wanted us to go to Czechoslovakia to shoot it. There's no speaking; it would be this actor and myself sitting down in a jazz club at a table, and there'll be some Czech jazz musicians up there playing and then a voice-over about Infiniti—something like that. So naturally I didn't do it. I mean, for me to just be validating white jazz musicians—I'm not going to put myself in that position. I'm glad they still think I'm viable to do it, but I'm not gonna do that shit, man.

I did one commercial, some time ago, where I was playing on the bridge for Pioneer. They said, "Sonny Rollins really went to practice on the bridge and became excellent, like our product"—something like that is cool, where I'm identified and the people know it's me playing. But to sit down and validate somebody else's shit, it's just not right. It would get me a lot of exposure, it would be cash, of course, but I reached the conclusion a long time ago that I'm not rich, I'm not going to get rich, I just want to make enough to make it. Fuck trying to get into that race. I don't want it; I don't even want to speak to those people about it 'cause I don't like them.

Was that like a revelation—some sort of spiritual thing that led you to do that?

It happened because I was getting a lot of publicity at the time. I had a band with Elvin [Jones] and I was playing these places, and I remember the place I played in Baltimore and people didn't really get it, so I said, "Man, I'm not really doing it. I got to get myself together. First of all, I'ma go back and woodshed." That's why I went on the bridge. Some cat, a writer, was up across the bridge one day and saw me playing, but nobody wouldn't have even known it if it hadn't been for him. That's how it happened. It didn't have anything to do with trying to make it public.

Why are you so hard on yourself?

I'm hard on myself because maybe I been around a lot of great musicians, and I don't think I'll ever be at the level of some of the people I been around. So I'm trying to reach that level, I'm trying to reach a level of performance, and that's what it's about.

They used to have something called the pat juba in slavery days: The white slave owners made two black guys beat each other up and one survives, and the masters stand around and watch. I think that still goes on. When it comes to blacks, it always seems to be a competition, fighting to see who's going to be the

diva, like they're having a diva war to see who's going to be accepted. There can only be one dancer, or one writer, one musician. They tried to do that with you and Coltrane, to play you against each other.

We didn't react to it. Coltrane was beautiful, a very spiritual person. He was like a minister. We were thinking about music. It was the writers who influenced the friends who–

Was it just a few writers who did this?

Probably. Remember, when Coltrane and I came out, I was popular before Coltrane. We used to be referred to as the angry young tenors–we were against, like, the Stan Getzes, the *Birth of the Cool*, we were sort of a reaction against that. That was still going on at that time, so we were the angry tenors and nobody was thinking about that shit. But I noticed that without even realizing that's what they were doing in slavery days. I noticed that you could never have more than one person up there at a time.

Let me ask you about gangsta rap.

I like the content of rap because it's the black experience; what they're saying is the truth. Not everything–I'm talking about the political stuff, of course. We have to accept that 'cause that's what's happening.

What about the style, all this mixing and sampling and stuff they do?

Well, they sampled some of my stuff. This group Digable Planets did some of my stuff. I heard it in a store; I heard somebody playing some of my stuff.

How do you feel about that?

It's okay, it's all right. I just don't want to be ripped off. I need my money. So I like the political thing and I like some of the rhythms that them cats are playing. I can use it. I'm not an old fogey.

What about the controversy at Lincoln Center, where they're accusing Wynton Marsalis of reverse racism? Some of the white musicians say he didn't hire enough of them and that some of the white musicians can play better than black musicians. What do you think about that?

I think jazz has done so much to bring people together, but jazz is only an art form. You can't change a society, unfortunately, so regardless of what Wynton does at Lincoln Center–Coltrane did all these records, Billie Holiday sang–regardless, the society is still backward on racial matters. I like to be democratic; I have a white boy playing in my band right at the moment. But it's not a personal thing. I find people personally who are great, but the oppressive society just makes it impossible to be real with people. It always fucks everything up.

So are they trying to promote a pat juba between Wynton and Lincoln Center? Trying to put them against each other?

Yeah, yeah, that's silly. That's ridiculous, man. They say jazz is really catching on now since the computers, because everybody's online and you can find out how to buy records, so maybe that's good. But still, as long as society is like that, it's fucked-up, and it's always going to be some shit. So first let 'em straighten out the society, then let 'em come to jazz. ■

"I'm hard on myself because I've been around a lot of great musicians and I don't think I'll ever reach that level."

Into the Night

Wool, leather, velvet…subtle textures and elegant silhouettes combine for the ultimate in winter overcoats

Photographs by Kazunali Tajima. Styling by Derick Procope

Black wool hat, black wool turtleneck, and black single-breasted wool coat, all by Yohji Yamamoto

Brown wool car coat and brown silk tie, both by Alberto Biani per New York; maroon button-down shirt and brown cotton velvet six-button vest, both by Romeo Gigli

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Brown waxed leather double-breasted coat and cream ribbed cotton fitted shirt, both by Romeo Gigli; brown-and-red wool gingham trouser by Alberto Biani per New York

Black wool three-button maxicoat and black hooded stretch top, both by Romeo Gigli

Top: Brown herringbone wool coat with faux-fur collar and midnight-and-beige cotton frill-front shirt, both by Romeo Gigli; brown moleskin single-breasted suit by C.P. Company. Bottom: Brown single-breasted wool coat by Yohji Yamamoto; cream button-down shirt and tan-and-black scarf, both by Emporio Armani; black felt hat by Makins

Black single-breasted suit by Paul Smith Women; black hooded stretch top by Romeo Gigli

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MOTOWN

LOOK

Stacey Dash

"The thing that inspires my acting the most is that I get paid to lose my mind," says Stacey Dash. Certainly anyone from the South Bronx who can play a rich, bratty 1970s schoolgirl as convincingly as she did in *Clueless* must be somewhat schizophrenic. And while Dash, who says she's 22, is definitely free-spirited, her head's been stuck on Hollywood for quite some time. "When I was about five, my aunt and I would act out Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp," says Dash of her theatrical upbringing. "She'd play the soundtrack, and we'd perform it together. That's what first motivated me to act."

After high school, Dash landed a cameo on *The Cosby Show* as Denise's pregnant friend ("I was the naughty girl having sex," she says, laughing). She then made the move into film, starting with Richard Pryor's *Moving* in 1988. In her fifth big-screen role, *Cold Around the Heart* (due in 1997), Stacey plays Bec, a 17-year-old hitchhiker who cops a ride with a vengeful jewel thief in search of his double-crossing partner. But her *Clueless* fame also brings her back to TV in September. In her new ABC sitcom based on the movie, Dash will be re-creating her role as Dionne.

Despite a career on the verge, the petite, caramel-skinned, jade-eyed belle insists her casting calls have often been more like crank calls. "First of all, I'm not white, and second, I've heard I'm not black enough," says Dash. "One time, a casting director told me I didn't have the 'nigger quality.' I felt like saying, 'Whatever the fuck that is, thank God I don't have it.' "

As for the future, Stacey has business on her mind. "I want to make more money, avoid being typecast, and do *Mission Impossible II*," she says, "but only if I can be alive with Tom in the end."

OJ Lima

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT MAXWELL

word LOOK

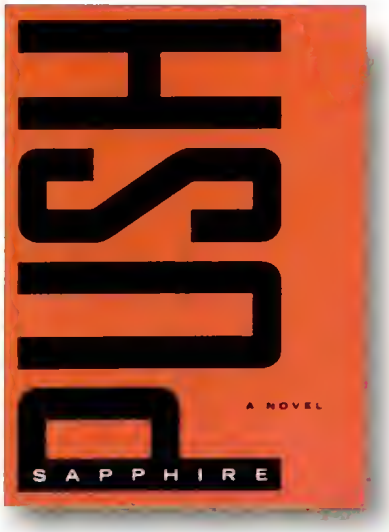
Sapphire: Literature's Bright Jewel

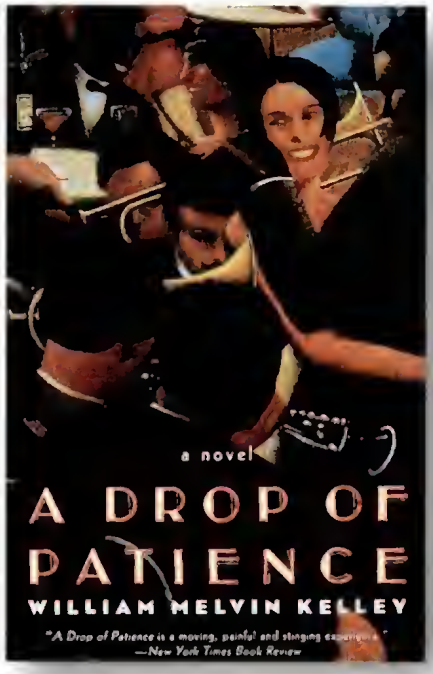
After 20 years as a writer/performance poet, 46-year-old Sapphire has claimed her spot in the mainstream. Just two short years ago, her book of poems, *American Dreams* (Serpent's Tail), was turned down by New York bookstores because it was printed by "too small a press." Now "pretty" magazines such as *Elle* and highbrow literary bastions like *The New Yorker* can't get enough of Sapphire's first novel, *Push* (Knopf), the story of a black teenage girl on welfare impregnated with her father's child.

"It blew my mind that these magazines about beauty, thinness, and fashion somewhere connected with this book, more than middle-class blacks," says the writer, who taught adult-literacy classes in the toughest pockets of Harlem for eight years. But Sapphire accepts her newfound success without fear of being labeled a sellout. "I never intended to be underground," she says. "Marginalization is part of oppression. When you do art, you want to reach everybody. And while I'm talking about a very specific situation and person, I'm talking to everybody."

In both of her works, Sapphire's intoxicating lyrical style exposes some of society's ugliest truths—poverty, illiteracy, and sexual abuse—while giving voice to those who've been traditionally silenced. "I think if there is something festering," she says, "it's better just to cut it open, expose it, let it bleed. And if possible, it will heal."

Rose-Anne Clermont





Real Jazz Fiction

It is a rare book that embraces both the beauty of musical landscapes and the misery of the real world. Originally published in 1965, William Melvin Kelley's *A Drop of Patience* (newly available from Ecco Press/W.W. Norton after many years out of print) is the story of a blind orphan who becomes a groundbreaking jazz master. Kelley is one of the few writers in the genre of so-called jazz fiction who deals with his protagonist (Ludlow Washington) as a complex artist trying to create a space for his art instead of looking for a vein to shoot Birdman smack. For once, neither heroin nor bad behavior is used as a stand-in for genius. Washington demonstrates his brilliance whenever he climbs onto the bandstand to play on his unspecified instrument.

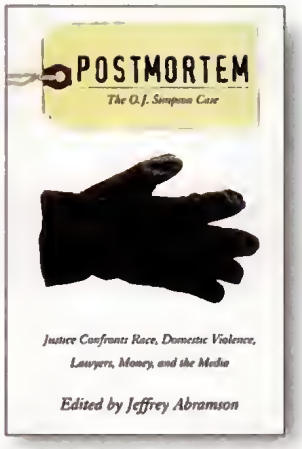
Unlike other writers who have explored this kind of jazz fiction, Kelley tells the tale in a smooth, poetic voice that never attempts to duplicate the improvisatory style of the music itself. From the Jim Crow South, where Washington is forced to deal with another kind of slavery, to the swank clubs of New (Harlem) York, his blindness never becomes a handicap to his own visions of music or life. *A Drop of Patience* is proof that William Melvin Kelley understands that jazz is more than an art form; it's also a historical and social document.

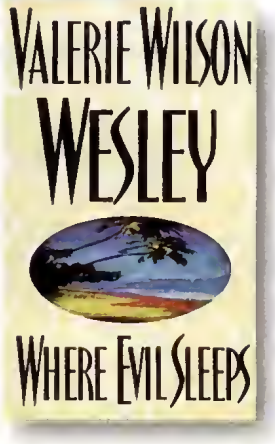
Michael A. Gonzales

Fall Book Roundup

This autumn, some engrossing fiction and eye-opening essays are blowing in with the turning leaves. The 32 short stories in *Go the Way Your Blood Beats* (Henry Holt)—edited by Shawn Stewart Ruff and including such authors as E. Lynn Harris and Audre Lorde—delve fearlessly into African-American gay and lesbian experiences, exploring homophobia and self-acceptance.... Lou Berry's poignant *Tomorrow* (James C. Winston) soberly plunges into the fictional diary of 31-year-old social worker Norma Jean, who finds her mundane "happily" married life unraveled by harsh reality.... If you thought you'd read everything about O.J. Simpson, check out editor Jeffrey Abramson's summons of 26 scholars, including Michael Eric Dyson and Gloria Steinem, to dissect the murders—and the broader issue of domestic violence—in the thoughtful *Postmortem: The O.J. Simpson Case* (HarperCollins).... *Where Evil Sleeps* (G.P. Putnam's Sons) is author Valerie Wilson Wesley's third novel in her chocolate female sleuth series. This time, detective Tamara Hayle finds herself neck-deep in murder while vacationing in Jamaica—and all clues point to her as murderess! With *Evil*, Wesley once again captivates mystery lovers to the hilt.

Omoronke Idowu





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Gear: Camouflage

This fall, it's war! At least that's the latest trend on the streets. Top guns Calvin Klein, Gianni Versace, Donna Karan, Chanel, and Gucci are all selling (expensive) varieties of traditional military uniforms. But they're not alone: In the trenches, sportswear designers with their ears to the ground are creating camouflage and fatigue clothing in modern fabrics like leather, nylon, and rubber that prepare wearers for the daily rigors of urban battle. This season, it appears, the revolution will be stylized. ***Emil Wilbekin***

From left: Camouflage hat by 2B!; corduroy jacket by D&G for Dolce & Gabbana; T-shirt by Rock Hard; nylon cargo pant by Cybertek; boots by N.Y. Lugz. Camouflage hat by Echō Unlimited; rubber bib overalls and jacket, both by Helly Hansen; boots by Chippewa. Newark Eagles cap by Blue Marlin; camouflage pullover by Echō Unlimited; nylon camouflage cargo pant by Laura Whitcomb for Label; boots by Reebok. Khaki hat, khaki vest, and T-shirt, all by Rock Hard; leather camouflage pant by Laura Whitcomb for Label; boots by Reebok

Runway Report: Fall '96 Women's Wear

Gone are the drab, grunge, and utilitarian days. As seen on the women's runways, fashion designers are giving up the funk: bright colors, wild prints, and *lots* of glamour. Velvet, fake fur, suede, metallic, plaid, Missoni prints, and loads of attitude sparked the runways, offering women a fresh, sexy, modern approach to dressing (pants are especially popular). The idea this fall is—as George Clinton puts it—"If anybody gets funked up, it's gonna be you!" *E.W.*

Betsey Johnson

Joop!

Todd Oldham

Isaac Mizrahi

Anna Sui

Versus

DKNY

LOOK stage/screen

Film: 'Get on the Bus'

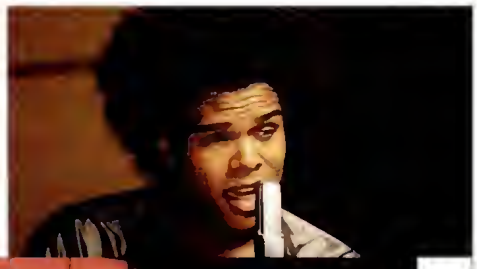
Fifteen black men board a bus in L.A.'s Crenshaw district bound—atonement or bust—for the Million Man March. So begins Spike Lee's latest flick, *Get on the Bus*, opening on October 16, the one-year anniversary of the march. Though the movie ends before the sojourners actually hit the Capitol Mall, much ground is covered on the bumpy, church-group–style trip. "This is a journey," says Charles S. Dutton, who plays the bus driver. "It's about people in search of their humanity, and they find it through these incidents on the bus on the way there."

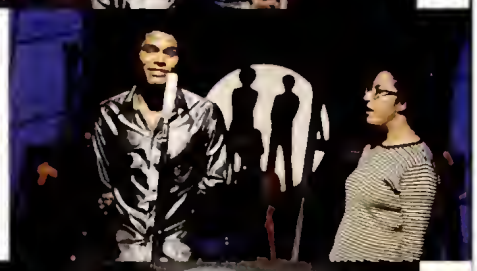
Ever in search of his own humanity, Lee jumped at the chance to direct a march movie when approached by producers Barry Rosenbush and Bill Borden. "I think that day was a great day in America, despite the slant the white media tried to give it by focusing on Minister Farrakhan," says Lee. "We knew we could get the money from the studio, but in keeping with the spirit of the march, we said, 'Let's own the film; let's finance this ourselves.' " Six-figure contributions were solicited from such celebs as Danny Glover, Wesley Snipes, and Will Smith. Finally, with $2.5 million in their coffers, Spike and company shot *Bus* in three weeks. "*She's Gotta Have It* cost around $175,000, so I'm not completely alien to doing a film on this scale," says Lee. "It just meant this was a no-frills project." Accordingly, Lee and the 20 actors—including Dutton, Ossie Davis, Andre Braugher, and Isaiah Washington—all worked for much less than their usual fees. All the director needs now is another Million Man March—this time to the theaters.

Heather S. Keets

Shoot: Maxwell

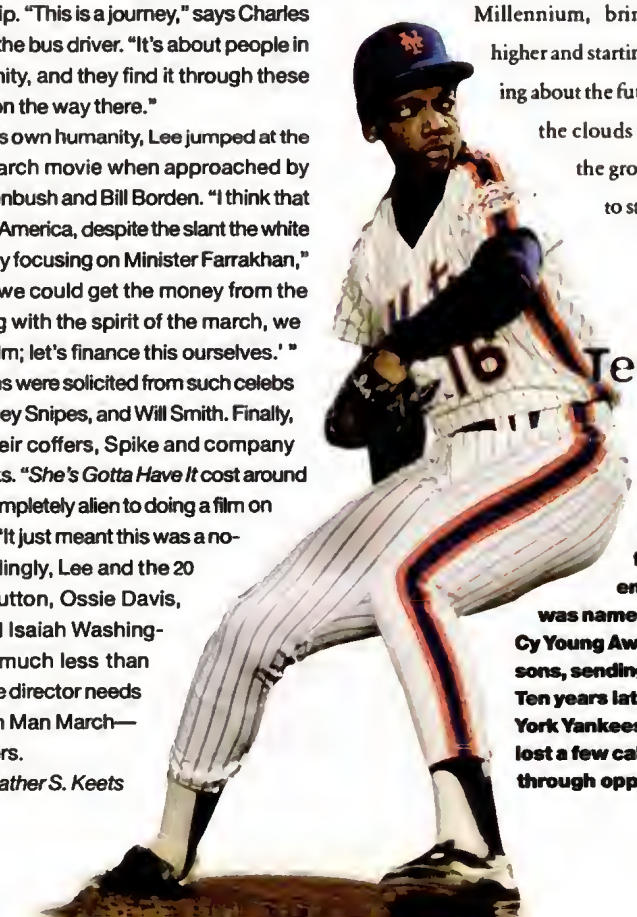
Text and photos by Lisa Leone





Maxwell's new video, "Ascension (Don't Even Wonder)," starts out dark and moody. Only the singer's silhouette can be seen. Gradually, at each break in the song, the lights behind him change from blue to red to gold and then—representing the final stage of spiritual enlightenment—to white. At one point, director Liz Freidlander decides to shoot at 40 frames per second instead of the usual 24, to slow down the image and make it more fluid. This means Maxwell has to lip-synch the song at a faster speed, and he ends up singing out loud like Alvin & the Chipmunks. He keeps a perfect flow and receives a round of applause from the crew after he's finished.

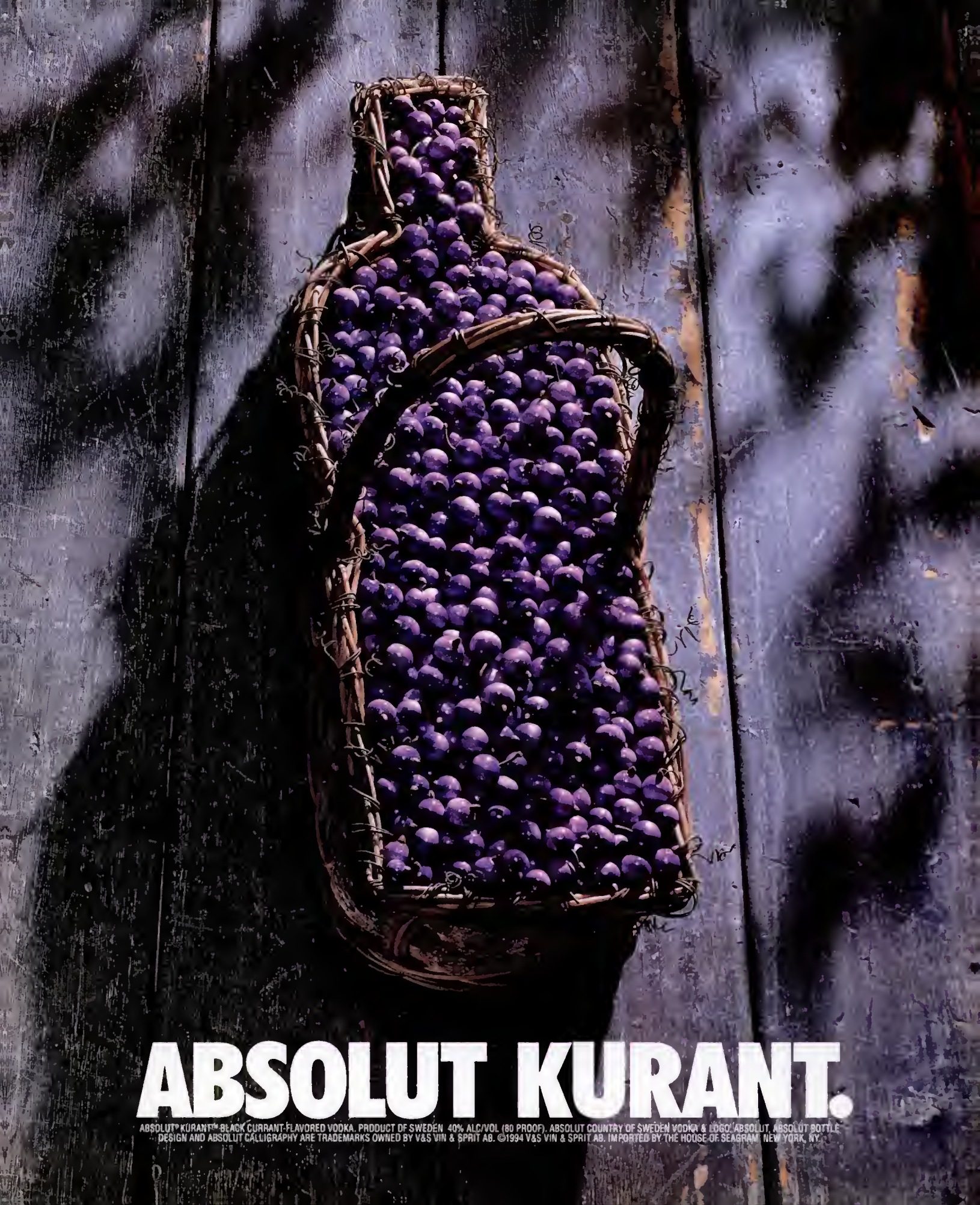
"The futuristic vibe of the video represents the ascension in the song," Maxwell says later. "I wanted to deal with the whole set of issues concerning the coming of the Millennium, bringing people higher and starting them thinking about the future." With his head in the clouds but his feet firmly on the ground, Maxwell is ready to step up to the next level.



Ten Years Later: Doc Gooden

Given all that Dwight Gooden's been through—the drug and alcohol habits, the suspensions, the accusations that he's washed up—it's hard to believe 10 years have passed since he helped the New York Mets win the 1986 World Series. Doc received his nickname back in high school from fans who chanted for the fireballer to "operate" on enemy hitters. The name followed him to the Mets, where he was named the National League Rookie of the Year in '84 and won the Cy Young Award in '85. He led the league in strikeouts in both those seasons, sending a combined 544 batters walking slowly back to the dugout. Ten years later, Gooden is enjoying a storybook comeback with the New York Yankees, heightened by his celebrated no-hitter. His heat may have lost a few calories, but Doc has proven he can still slice a clean incision through opposing lineups.

The Blackspot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CD 2000 Music Broadcast System

It sounds unlikely at first: a $29.95 gizmo that plugs into your living room stereo's headphone jack and magically dispatches sounds to your boom box in another room—no messy wires underfoot, no goofy antenna to clutter up your space. But it's actually pretty impressive, assuming you can decipher the "four-step, easy-to-follow instructions." Phonodaptor Products' CD 2000 Music Broadcast System transmits up to 50 feet inside or 100 feet outside, and for all this convenience you compromise only a little of the purity of digital sound (there's a trace of hum). Hearing it send your favorite songs around corners or upstairs is as freaky as checking out a good ventriloquist. *Lang Phipps*

To order, send a check for $29.95 plus $3 shipping and handling to: PPC Inc., 5231 East Memorial Drive, Suite 276, Stone Mountain, Ga. 30083. Specify product code No. 33-41.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAYSON KEELING

Programmable Video Games

The days of being confined by the limitations of a programmer's imagination have come to an end. Many games, such as the ever-popular Doom (id Software) and Marathon (Bungie Software), have added the gamer's ultimate dream: the option of custom-programming brand-new scenes. You can create extra rooms (or "wads") in Doom, then scan in pictures of your own personal monsters—like your kid brother's favorite purple dinosaur—and watch them die painful deaths at the wrong end of your BFG-9000 ("big f#*@ing gun"). Marathon, meanwhile, lets you create your own "map" of any real-life city you desire, walk out into the streets with a double-barreled shotgun, and play postal employee. "Maps" and "wads" can be traded with friends, or downloaded from the Internet. This new wrinkle in game technology is a must for any fanatic who's tired of the original software and wants to vent a little of his frustration. *Gregg Bishop*

Internet Phone Service

If your Aunt Minnie is still asking you why there's so much fuss about the Internet, tell her you can now make a phone call to Haiti for less than $1 an hour. Last year saw the release of Internet Phone, the first software application that allows multimedia PC users to make long-distance calls over the Net. Caveats: The sound quality is mediocre (one problem is the dreaded "delay"), and whoever you call has to have the same software as you. But the bottom line is phenomenal cost savings, particularly for international calls, because the new technology bypasses long-distance carriers entirely. Other than your Internet provider and local access number, there's no clock running.

The immediate response from the phone companies can only be described as stunned silence. To add insult to injury, other software makers quickly got into the act. "There are about 18 companies that provide this technology these days, and the list is growing," says Jeff Pulver, author of *Internet Telephone Toolkit* (John Wiley & Sons) and chairman of the Voice on the Net Coalition (http://www.von.org), an online group that disseminates information about Internet telephony. Finally, in March, the America's Carriers Telecommunications Association, a trade association of smaller long-distance carriers, petitioned the FCC to stop companies from selling Internet telephony products. The VON Coalition, along with companies like Microsoft and Netscape that make the software, responded with a brief asking the FCC not to heed the carriers' call. Then, in April, the tables suddenly turned when an AT&T spokesman told the *Investor's Business Daily*, "We view telephone services on the Internet as a potentially large business, and we're looking into it"—and Sprint actually joined the VON Coalition in June. Expect this to become a global battle filled—for now—with static. *Harry Allen*

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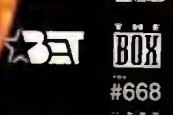

IN-STORES NOW

REVOLUTIONS

AALIYAH 'ONE IN A MILLION' BLACKGROUND/ATLANTIC

BY DREAM HAMPTON

Aaliyah could easily have turned into just a warm, fuzzy little R&B memory. I mean, it's nothing short of amazing that her scandalous alleged marriage to R&B maverick R. Kelly isn't a permanent prefix to her name. Grown divas—like Whitney Houston, for example—could learn something from the wall of silence erected by Aaliyah's camp when the story (in August 1994, Aaliyah, then 15, reportedly ran away from Detroit to Chicago to marry Kelly, then 27) broke wide. Aaliyah's deny-everything-once-then-run-off-to-Japan policy made even hard proof like the Cook County marriage certificate printed in this magazine look a little suspect—like some vicious editor's fantasy. Thanks, though, to the management of her protective family, and more importantly, to a fine sophomore opus, the new *One in a Million*, Aaliyah may not only have survived her melodramas but might just become our next princess superstar.

No small feat, considering it was ultimately Aaliyah's thin hips that would have been on the line (as opposed to Kelly's),

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given the tricky dynamics of patriarchy. Maybe 10 years from now, she'll tell all à la Janet (you may recall Miss Jackson wholly denied her teen marriage to James DeBarge way back when, only to recant years later), but for now Aaliyah's working hard to be the sweet, sexy thing we need her to be.

And she is sweet. Not in an annoying, syrupy way, but in a manner deliciously feline. Throughout *One in a Million*, Aaliyah's voice is tender—slightly stronger than Jackson's anemic falsetto, but with the same pop appeal. I keep coming back to Jackson for a reason. Our reigning divas are all 30, or creeping up on it, and will inevitably be replaced by younger bodies that eighth-grade black girls will dream of occupying. If Brandy wants to be Whitney Houston bad enough, she may very well become her (minus the pipes of, course). And Miss Thang Monica, with all her grownness, may inadvertently inherit Anita Baker's title (again, minus the pipes). So why can't Aaliyah be tomorrow's Janet (minus the royal family, of course)?

Aaliyah, now 17, is definitely sexy enough for the position. Men generally think so too, though it's still illegal to act on the thought. Not that—especially on 1994's *Age Ain't Nothin' but a Number*—Aaliyah doesn't encourage Lolita fantasies. The title song to that platinum debut repeats the mantra "Age ain't nothin' but a number / Throwin' down ain't nothin' but a thing." And "Back & Forth," the album's No. 1 R&B single, was more of the same: gentle instruction from a curious beginner. Let Brandy and her parents guard the singer/TV star's very public virginity—Aaliyah insisted that girls will be girls, and that they will be none the worse for wear. Indeed, she seemed to insinuate, they may well blossom into insightful, experienced women.

One in a Million is a step in that direction. The hip hop–inspired production is solid and supportive, and Aaliyah's voice is pretty and straightforward. But while she articulates keys and can caress a note, Aaliyah possesses no sweeping range or gospel capabilities. Her producers, who include Jermaine Dupri and Timbaland, a talented fugitive from DeVante Swing's camp (and conspicuously do *not* include R. Kelly), back her strengths with seamless, funky tracks. And suggestive songs like "Giving You More" and "Hot Like Fire" let us know she's on the same sticky, authentic teen-sex shit she was on in *Age Ain't*.

"Heartbroken" and "4 Page Letter" are beautifully composed ballads (both written and produced by Timbaland) that allow her to flaunt her voice's might. They also seem intended for that mysterious lover who taught her the first hard lessons of love. Still, Aaliyah shows that she can be naively loyal (though in the real world, this isn't strictly a function of youth): On the jeep-friendly Dupri track "I Gotcha' Back," Aaliyah believably promises devotion "no matter how you act / No matter what you do."

Aaliyah's voice is tender—slightly stronger than Janet Jackson's anemic falsetto, but with the same pop appeal.

The album has some surprises too. Like any self-respecting Marvin Gaye fan, I cringed when I learned Aaliyah had covered his classic 1977 party jam "Got to Give It Up." But her version is agreeably accurate (even with Slick Rick's silky snippet of an intro), and fits her more than her ordinary cover of the Isley Brothers' "(At Your Best) You Are Love." Like Marvin, it seems Aaliyah is also able to be convincing as a wallflower "too nervous / To really get down."

Aaliyah's debut—like Kris Kross's, on the hip hop side—spawned the current trend of boys and girls dropping out of school to croon. They win a couple of talent shows and think they're ready for the big time. But of all these young, personally tutored performers, only three are contenders: the high-charting Brandy and Monica, who have yet to face the pressure of a second album, and Aaliyah, who establishes herself, with the impressive *One in a Million*, as the forerunner. She's already survived the kind of scandal that inevitably ambushes any diva. Plus, *somebody*'s got to fulfill our fantasies as we go into the 21st century. Aaliyah may just be the one.

'SET IT OFF' SOUNDTRACK VARIOUS ARTISTS
ELEKTRA

Girlz-in-the-'hood undertones notwithstanding, the soundtrack to the dramatic flick *Set It Off*—about four young black women from the projects who become serial bank robbers—is a well-packaged grab bag of Top 40 pop, backwoods hip hop, and attitudinal R&B. The album delivers its share of the designated hits we've come to expect from movie soundtracks, many of which fare better on the charts than their movie counterparts at the box office. It seems *Set It Off* will be no exception.

Wailing rock reminiscent of their 1992 crossover success "Free Your Mind," En Vogue's relentless "Don't Let Go (Love)" is the quartet's first single in four years. Over a droning guitar, Maxine, Dawn, Terry, and Cindy harmonize so well they sound like a single voice; but they come stronger and fiercer than expected: "What's it going to be? / Cause I can't pretend / Don't you want to be more than just friends? / Have the right to lose control / Don't let go." And they don't. The song builds with sexual intensity and climaxes with a chillingly quiet piano solo.

The poignant "Missing You," pairing new jacks Brandy and Tamia with veteran divas Gladys Knight and Chaka Khan, is anthemic in a pull-yourself-up-by-your-heartstrings sort of way. The syrupy chorus echoes: "You were my sister, my strength and my pride / Only God may know why / Still love will get by." And in a "That's What Friends Are For" context, it works.

Unfortunately, at times, *Set It Off*'s R&B tracks are, well, off. Though the artists are stellar and the ideas noteworthy, the tracks don't seem to fit the theme, as in Seal's overproduced Jimi Hendrix cover "Hey Joe" and Simply Red's remake of Aretha Franklin's 1973 "Angel."

Where hip hop's concerned, however, *Set It Off* delivers, including charmers like the ever-entertaining Busta Rhymes' "Live To Regret," which samples the chorus of Brownstone's "Grapevyne"; and Queen Latifah's "Name Callin'," the antithesis of 1993's "U.N.I.T.Y." Seemingly embodying the persona of Cleo, her tough dyke character in the movie, Latifah comes off much harder than usual. Her highness asserts, "I wouldn't diss another sister / Unless she had it comin'."

Arguably the most inventive cut is Bone Thugs-N-Harmony's hypnotic "Days of Our Livez," which samples Quiet Storm staples "Tender Love" by the Force M.D.'s and Janet Jackson's "Making Love in the Rain." Bone ask us to look beyond their affection for blunt smoke and freedom hair: "Now come into my realm / And you can see that we are more than thugs." The track reflects the trials of *Set It Off*'s four women in ways Nina Simone herself might have conjured. And past their struggles, beyond their mistakes shines empowerment.

Tracy E. Hopkins

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RELATIVITY 411

First off, I wanna say peace to all the heads that read this joint. Now I'm gonna bust you in ya head with the 411 straight off the Relativity Camp Grounds. Rumor has it that Rela just signed M.O.P. to a recording deal. Their album is due in late October. Also coming atcha full speed is the PMD joint *"Business Is Business"*– the first single will be *"Rugged N Raw"*.

Relativity has two tight compilations coming from the camp. One is from New York's producer/DJ Frankie Cutlass, whose past work includes *"Boriquas On Da Set"* and *"Puerto Rico"*. Now he's gonna lace you up with a comp of some of NY's most potent rappers. The other release is a DJ Honda joint. This kid is fresh off the plane from Japan. I know ya probably saying "What does Japan know about Hip Hop besides making Sony mixers and 1200 turntables." Well, DJ Honda came to NY and picked a few of the hottest cats and put it down. These two compilations are Rela's best kept underground east coast Hip Hop for this year.

Coming out September 24 is The Dayton Family's *"F.B.I."* We think this is gonna be one of the most controversial albums of the year. These Mo Ph... from Flint, Michigan are hard. If you don't believe me check out the song *"F.B.I."* Also, blowing up on the west coast is Dru Down, Oakland's reigning "Mac of the Year." His new album, *"Can You Feel Me"*, is all that. The Source Magazine says, "Overwhelming, should silence any critics who claimed his hair was flyer than his mic skills" and picked the title track as a Sure Shot Single.

Here's the final chapter on the down low, Suave House has just released another dope album titled *"Wicked Wayz"* from Mr. Mike. Me personally, I give this joint a 5 mic rating. It's all that and a phat dub sack. Also putting down late this summer is Tela dropping his package.

It's on this summer at Rela. We got the raw dope for ya block to make ya head knock. That's why we're putting out our first Relativity mix tape, "Urban Assault", featuring Common's *"Bitch In Yoo"*, The Beatnuts new joint *"Find That"*, and Fat Joe's *"Firewater"*.

P.S.: get ready for some new dope from Mo Thugs. Don't sleep. Beware of the Urban Assault.

SUAVE HOUSE R RELATIVITY

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HOUSE OF PAIN 'TRUTH CRUSHED TO EARTH SHALL RISE AGAIN' TOMMY BOY

Make way for the leprechauns of rage! Yup, House of Pain–the beer-swillingest, blood-spillingest Irish boys on Sunset Strip–are back for thirds. With their first two albums–1992's self-titled debut and '94's *Same As It Ever Was*–Erik "Everlast" Schrody and his sidekick, Danny Boy, poured "fine malt lyrics" over the depth-charge beats of DJ Lethal and executive producer DJ Muggs of Cypress Hill. Back then, House of Pain hit hard as shillelaghs.

Unfortunately, *Truth Crushed to Earth Shall Rise Again* proves things ain't the same as they ever were. "I don't even know them motherfuckers," Muggs said last year in *ego trip* magazine. This split over "creative differences" has left the House of Pain lacking a creative architect. Aside from an exotic, belly-rippling bongo loop on "What's That Smell" that's awfully reminiscent of Muggs's work on *Temples of Boom*, Lethal's beats are surface-level and boring. The student even recycles some of his teacher's own recycling: Audio Two's classic "Top Billin' " makes its second appearance on successive House of Pain albums. Without Muggs's sonic blueprints, Lethal can't build anything but a little hut of dull ache.

Worst of all, though, HOP's lyrics have gone skunk. Delivered in an annoyingly exaggerated gravel-throated bark–like Wolfman Jack or Pantera tough-guy Philip Anselmo–Everlast's rhymes are so weak you wonder whether Muggs had been pulling a Cyrano de Bergerac all those years. "When it's time to get nice," E raps, apparently giving up completely, "I heat it up like spice." Come on, man–that one's been used. Remember what little girls are made of?

Then, on "Reachin' Out," the debonair Casanova offers a lucky young lady this sexy pickup line: "I'll size up your gap / You'll size up my bone / It's thick and meaty like a hot calzone." Mmmm. Greasy *and* cheesy. What ever happened to "Kiss me, I'm Irish?"

David Bry

TERRI & MONICA 'SUGA' EPIC

Back in the late '80s, as Al B. Sure!'s backup singers, Terri & Monica were part of a trio called the Gyriz. Now, minus an original member, they're certified grown women, having gone on to write for Soul for Real, Total, and Monifah in addition to cowriting and coproducing their comely second album, *Suga*. More sassy than saccharine, the ultrafunky track "Sexuality (If You Take Your Love)" and the groove-filled title track are sexy and straightforward without being vulgar. On the party jam "Shake Your Body," it becomes clear that neither Terri nor Monica has an extraordinary voice. But no matter. Together, they make damn good music.

Paula T. Renfroe

REVOLUTIONS EMOTIONS

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THE ROOTS 'ILLADELPH HALFLIFE' GEFFEN

MICHAEL LAVINE

"Life is all about chances," Roots MC Malik B rhymes on *illadelph halflife*'s "No Great Pretender." As one of the few rap combos in history to legitimately integrate live instrumentation into a hip hop context, the Roots know something about challenging the norm. Their 1994 debut album, *Do You Want More?!!!??!*, rewrote the existing definition of "hip hop band," abetting the fluid freestyle effects of vocalists Black Thought and Malik B with warm keyboard harmonies, occasional human beat-box orchestration, and interactive improvisational ingenuity.

Similarly, on much of their follow-up effort, the Philly crew bob and weave past potential sophomore slump with the vigor of a sprightly Smokin' Joe Frazier. Tracks like "Respond React," "Section," and "No Alibi" display the group's talents at their most streamlined, with melodious grooves constructed in the soulful spirit of Roy Ayers and Ramsey Lewis, and sharp couplets dispensed with wit-friendly accuracy.

True to the group's ambitious tendencies, *Illadelph halflife* also attempts to expand the Roots' sound by blending samples and inviting guest vocalists to the session. At times these efforts yield high-powered treats: The seductive rhythms of "The Hypnotic" benefit from D'Angelo's "Brown Sugar"–daddy presence. "Ital (Universal Side)" smoothly navigates time signature switches with a vocal assist from A Tribe Called Quest's Q-Tip, and "Push Up Ya Lighter" features lyrical exchanges with Philly filly Bahamadia over a dope minimalist arrangement.

At other times, however, the results are less convincing: The syrupy backup choruses on "Never" and "Episodes" come off cloying, and the noodling horn-section jam on "One Shine" wanders. Meanwhile, the RZA-like string hits of "Concerto of a Desperado" and vocal swells of "Clones" may suggest the Roots can compete with hip hop's plethora of sample-dominated acts, but at what cost? After all, here's a group that built a rep on playing its *own* music with the intention of not sounding like anyone else.

Then again, it's thanks to whatever experiments (both well- and ill-advised) they may pursue in the name of artistic growth that the Roots maintain their originality—a situation they acknowledge on the LP's "Outro" as a somber Chuck D narrates, "For now the Roots remain a little bit of an enigma, even to themselves."

Clocking in at well over an hour, *illadelph halflife* may require full attention spans to adequately absorb, but it's ultimately time well spent. Elton John got nothing on these kids. Philadelphia freedom is alive and well. *Chairman Mao*

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VOLS. 2 & 3

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REVOLUTIONS

BOOM SHOTS

BY ROB KENNER

The best singers don't need mere words to make their point. Take FREDERICK "TOOTS" HIBBERT, the man who coined the term *reggae* back in 1968 with an organ-driven stomper called—what else?—"Do the Reggay." Toots's throat sounded like an enormously powerful reed instrument as he blasted soulful solos atop the delicate harmonies of Raleigh Gordon and Jerry Mathias. Together they comprised the MAYTALS, a vocal trinity that never followed fashion yet remained relevant throughout the evolution of pre-dancehall reggae—from ska to rock steady to rockers and R&B fusion.

Whether delivering a prisoner's plaint ("54-46"), a sufferer's selection ("Time Tough"), a churchical hymn ("Hallelujah"), or an account of a country wedding ("Sweet & Dandy"), the Maytals blew like a tropical storm raining sweat and tears. Not even the Wailers inspired as many international imitators, especially in England. The Specials' 1980 "Monkey Man" cover and the Clash's 1980 version of "Pressure Drop" put fire in the belly of these seminal Brit bands—a fire sparked by Toots. *Time Tough: The Anthology* (Island Jamaica) is a dynamic double CD with 41 tracks that range from late-'60s ska classics like "Six and Seven Books of Moses" to Toots's historic 1988 solo Memphis sessions, during which he masterfully interpreted Stax standards like Otis Redding's "(I've Got) Dreams to Remember."

Toots

Winston Rodney, better known as BURNING SPEAR, is another irreplaceable voice in the reggae firmament. While Toots energizes, Spear hypnotizes with a heavy dread chant style that builds dramatic tension through repetition and fiery conviction. Set to rock-hard drum and bass, and punctuated by blazing brass arrangements, Spear's songs never end—they just reverberate back into the earth's crust to surface again when necessary.

As much an educator as an entertainer, Spear takes the stage as the African Teacher, his themes always directly stated: **"No one remember old Marcus Garvey." "Do you remember the days of slavery?" "Do you know, social living is the best?"** The 35 crucial selections on *Chant Down Babylon: The Island Anthology* (also a part of the Island Jamaica series) are nowhere near a definitive account of Spear's 27-year career, which began at Studio One and hasn't stopped yet. But if these two discs (which, thankfully, include generous portions of dub) inspire new listeners to seek out full-length masterpieces like *Hail H.I.M.*, *Man in the Hills*, and *Garvey's Ghost*, then it's all good. As Rodney once sang, "Behold the Spear burning over yonder / When you fling it, man, it stick up / And yes, it catch a fire."

Toots has his throat, and Spear his birdcalls and "wa-da-da" chants. But when it comes to wordless impact, GREGORY ISAACS remains the undisputed Cool Ruler—one who can melt hearts with a single heartrending sigh.

The lonely lover who enjoyed worldwide notoriety with smash hits like "Number One," "Night Nurse," and "Rumors" has become something of a tragic figure in reggae, battling substance abuse and sometimes releasing product unworthy of his stellar talent. Gregory's own selection of personal favorites, *Looking Back* (Ras Records), begins with the 1973 "End of the World" and maintains a decidedly wistful tone throughout. It's hard not to get a little misty listening to these vintage 1970s recordings, but we all have to cry sometimes. If you should miss this one, you'll miss a good ting.

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'HIGH SCHOOL HIGH' SOUNDTRACK VARIOUS ARTISTS

BIG BEAT/ATLANTIC

This summer's heat has inspired a tricoastal dream team of rap that lays claim to the wettest soundtrack for hip hop thieves who go to school to sell drugs n' gunz. Representing the Wild West, Spice 1 teams with E-40 and the Click, bringin' a sample from Kool & the Gang's 1981 hit "Get Down on It" on "Why U Wanna Funk?," accompanied by nickel-plated licks to yo' ass! But cheers from adoring westside fans begin to set when hip hop diplomat KRS-One comes out of his South Bronx basement with his Alpine mike. His darkened track, "High School Rock," gets the brickyard bouncing. Gun-toting judges give up shiny nines for his rebellious performance.

On the other side of the track, "Skrilla," by Houston's Scarface, lifts victorious fists. And at the Women's Games, Little Kim, whose lyrical Gun-Fu brings out the Bad Girl in almost any Hot School, flips "Queen Bitch." It appears that she carries a subtle stiletto in her garter belt....

High School High addresses issues that have become major subjects in American high schools: extortion, armed robbery, drug trafficking, and murder. But there is hope, especially when warriors Pete Rock and Large Professor team up to create "The Rap World," the official anthem for sneaker-wearin' hustlers all over the earth!

Each track has its own signature, but all have been designed to capture gold label status. You can drive on cruise control from Long Island to the Games with De La Soul's "I Can't Call It"; Tribe opens the events in prayer with "Peace, Prosperity and Paper"; and D'Angelo and Erykah Badu's "Precious Love" closes 'em with gut-wrenching emotion.

But wait! "Wu-Wear" (the RZA, with Method Man and Cappadonna) and "Semi-Automatic: Full Rap Metal Jacket" (Inspectah Deck & U-God) light the torch, killin' unprotected heads at the three o'clock bell. And listen to the Braids' soaring remake of Queen's 1975 "Bohemian Rhapsody" at the gym. I don't give a *#%$@! about which side wins the war—just bring the noise! *Bönz Malone*

REVOLUTIONS

BUSH BABEES 'GRAVITY' WARNER BROS.

Mature would be one way to describe Bush Babees' second turn, *Gravity*—and not just because they dropped the "Da" from their name. The trio's deliveries aren't exactly complex, but their frank messages compensate: "Got a man named Stan who love to pop Moët / Living in the projects / And can't afford to pay his rent." But *Gravity*'s real surprise is in the production. Courtesy of undercover superproducer Shawn J. Period, the Ummah, Rahzel (down with the Roots), and Bush Babee Mr. Man, the tracks resonate with catchy bass lines, melodic vibes, and Pete Rock–style horns. And with the Posdnuos-produced "The Love Song" and Q-Tip's appearance on "3 MC's," Bush Babees make strong candidates for the latest Native Tongues addition. *8-Ball*

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20 QUESTIONS

REVOLUTIONS

1. Now that Ol' Dirty Bastard is serving time in New York's notoriously dangerous Rikers Island jail, why are we afraid for the other inmates?

2. It's 1996. Does anyone know where Bookman from *Good Times* is? **3.** How could the Olympic Dream Team, which makes millions a year, only donate a stingy $165,000 to the church-burnings rebuilding funds? **4.** When Jackie Joyner-Kersee won the 100 meter hurdles—in the rain *and* with a painfully sore hamstring—didn't you just *feel* her pain? **5.** Okay, we could all deal with Todd Bridges as freebaser and Dana Plato as thief/*Playboy* pin-up. But didn't your heart just drop when you saw Gary Coleman on the Psychic Friends Network? **6.** And while we're on it, has anyone seen Dionne Warwick's "Friends Can Be Lovers" video anywhere other than in the commercial? **7.** So what the heck does macarena mean, anyway? **8.** Who's the guy at Nike who thought they might sell more shoes by showing pictures of athletes barfing in their ads? **9.** Why isn't Shawn Wayans funny? **10.** Was he adopted? **11.** Were De La Soul's Posdnuos and the Nutty Professor separated at birth? **12.** You think T-Boz's fierce "Touch Myself" video is making Chilli and Left Eye wonder if they just might need to be a duo? **13.** Why is R&B quartet Dru Hill about to blow up? **14.** Montell Jordan, will you please let that tiny, Teddy Riley–style goatee go? **15.** With his new psycho-drama film *The Fan*, has Wesley Snipes finally made another movie worth watching? **16.** And why does Academy Award nominee Morgan Freeman keep getting second billing under these teen-idol white boys? **17.** After three decades of playing funky jazz piano, doesn't Les McCann's new *Listen Up!* prove his fingers are as nimble as ever? **18.** Can someone please tell the Fugees that *no*, they are not "Cool Like Dat"? That they are, in fact, "Everyday People"? **19.** Why is a certain movie studio acting like the "urban" audience would not be interested in seeing a film based on the life of Jean-Michel Basquiat? **20.** Finally, should the Braxtons have been cast in *To Wong Foo*, or what?

Gary

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BLAHZAY BLAHZAY 'BLAH, BLAH, BLAH'
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Out Loud, P.F. Cuttin'

REVOLUTIONS EMOTIONS

During the summer of 1995, then unheard-of producer DJ P.F. Cuttin' unleashed an attack on hip hop's tympanum by wedding Jeru the Damaja's home-'hood proclamation, Q-Tip's telephone surprisal, and Gwen McRae's sexual invitation from "Rockin' Chair" in musical matrimony. Together, they formed the chorus of Blahzay Blahzay's debut single "Danger." The ambush ran from East New York to Asia like someone being chased by a coked-up Tasmanian devil experiencing a paranoid high.

A full year later, in an attempt to parlay their 15 minutes into the wealth and prestige of the rap game, P. F. Cuttin' and rapper Out Loud finally present *Blah, Blah, Blah*. Borrowing a paragraph from the sacred production thesis of DJ Premier, Cuttin' adroitly smacks together drum patterns like Mom's peanut-butter-and-jam joints. But whereas Primo usually opts for one nimbly scratched vocal extract, Cuttin' peppers his dishes with two or more flavors, as on "Good Cop/Bad Cop." Here, KRS-One's "Officer, officer, officer, officer" from "Sound of da Police" is freaked propeller-style with an overlaid boast from the late Kid Hood to an ominously chilling effect, while Loud becomes a racist bully with a badge and a nasty disposition.

The album's tracks travel a wide range. From the title cut's tribal bounce to the hanging organ manipulations on "Don't Let This Rap Shit Fool You," Cuttin' and his creations set the stage for Loud's rugged, monotone flows. And while he ranks no closer to being the best rapper than he does to being the worst, Loud pulls his weight, fitting into the sonic scenery like the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle. In the intro, the group ask, "What do the Blahs mean, son?" While the question is never directly answered, it could mean *Blah, Blah, Blah* is that rare album where the music speaks to you as much as, if not more than, the verses. *kris ex*

AMBERSUNSHOWER 'WALTER T. SMITH' GEE STREET

Some may remember Ambersunshower from her days as one-half of the Brand New Heavies–type R&B group Groove Garden, but it's understandable if you don't. It's been four years since their undeveloped 1992 album, *Welcome to My Garden*. But on "Look Around My Window," the opening song on her solo debut, Amber reveals skills she's been nurturing in the interim. Her baritone rises high above the voluptuous, throbbing bass lines, instantly igniting your interest in what seems to be her reinvention of herself.

DONALD CHRISTIE

Via crafty jazz-beat soundscapes provided by both a live band and sampling technicians, *Walter T. Smith* flaunts Amber's vocal dexterity. One moment she's crooning; the next, as on "Feelings of Love," she's embracing a speakeasy style of poetic chatter.

Amber approaches music enthusiastically, with the wide-eyed discovery and sensitivity of a child. She's also quite sentimental; not only is *Walter T. Smith* endearingly titled after her late grandfather, but the title track serves as one of the album's most heartfelt moments when she sings, "All along my soul has been trying to find you."

Amber's voice and music can be quite compelling at times, as on "Rhythm Child," which features an acoustic guitar being carefully caressed while she exhales thoughts like a lullaby. But she relies too heavily on repeating short phrases and not saying much else. Given her obvious gifts, *Walter T. Smith* reveals surprisingly little that is memorable. And in the wake of serious new soul artists like Me'Shell NdegéOcello, Dana Bryant, and D'Angelo, Ambersunshower comes off a bit flat and contrived. *Walter T. Smith* sounds like a good club record when your brain is on empty. But, um, hey—who needs a message when you're getting your groove on? *Jazzbo*

MONTELL JORDAN 'MORE...' DEF JAM

On the strength of last year's monster debut, *This Is How We Do It*, with tracks like "Something for the Honeys," Montell Jordan established himself as the major mack troubadour *du jour*. However, as a card-carrying Playa Hater–for one, women ain't toys; second, there's too many heavy issues hanging over the heads of black folk for brothers to be "playin' "– by all intents and purposes, his sophomore album should be keeping my card table level. But Jordan accomplished a lil' sumpin'–sumpin' I hadn't quite counted on: He got better.

More... is a showcase for a slightly new and improved Jordan. His production is tighter, his vocals smoother, and his lyrics, though unabashedly clichéd, display greater maturity, passion, and vulnerability. With few side roads, he's traveled from mackism to manhood. Brother's learned to tell the difference between romance and hot sex on a platter.

"All I Need" (which uses the old standby sample from James Brown's 1970 "Funky Drummer") and "Falling" are standard pleas of true love delivered with a sincerity rare in music today. "Never Alone" warns a homie to stay with his girlfriend. "What's on Tonight" touches on sex without whisking a woman to Motel 6. Even the interludes, particularly the gospel-based "I Say Yes," sound better than many of today's new-jack themes.

Now, Jordan still has *some* dog in him: On the slick "Tricks on My Mind" (okralike in its use of Slick Rick's "Mona Lisa"), he digresses to playa mode. "Bounce 2 This" could easily be titled "This Is How We Do It (Again)." And it'd be nice to hear original dance songs rather than wholesale samples. (I can dream, can't I?) In the meantime, though, props must be given where props are due, and *More...* gets props. Still doesn't solve my wobbly table problem: Anyone got a 2 Live Crew tape?

Darrell McNeill

BLACK/NOTE 'NOTHIN' BUT THE SWING' IMPULSE!

TRACY LAMONICA

With *Nothin' but the Swing*, Black/Note have returned light years ahead of where their 1994 debut *Jungle Music* left off. On their CD jacket, they claim that "the standard that has separated serious [jazz] musicians from perpetrators has been the ability to swing." If nothing else, the hard bop Cali quintet, who composed and produced most of their own tracks, are cocksure. Extra support from fellow young bucks Nicholas Payton (trumpet) and Teodross Avery (saxophone), who fire their horns like cannons on Freddie Hubbard's "The Core," doesn't hurt, either. Despite their youth, Black/Note swing like '50s jazz bands used to, leaving no alternative but to take them seriously.

OJ Lima

"I'll see you when I see you(now let that echo)."
-Havoc
artist, Mobb Deep
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Montell Jordan
When you just can't get enough soul there's always
More...
The forthcoming album
featuring "I Like," "Falling" & "What's On Tonight"
There's always More... for your soul.
DJ Jam
def soul
MAD MANAGEMENT
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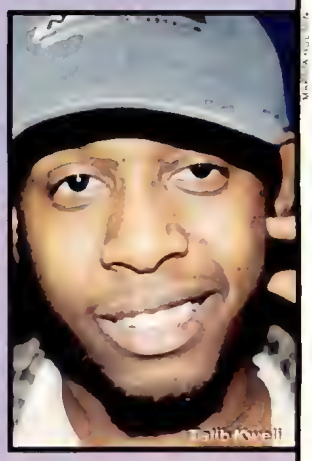
REVOLUTIONS

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

BY THE BLACKSPOT

Back in March, at the 10th National Black Writers Conference at Medgar Evers College in New York, a mild-mannered young brother by the name of **TALIB KWELI** stepped up to the podium with a mind full of rhymes to kick over live, resounding djembe beats. With a steady voice filled with electricity, he flipped his flow through a barely audible, static-y mike. The rhythm alone had the crowd—both young and old—throwing up their hands in unison; Kweli's crystal vocals ripped through the auditorium like ghetto kids on a Styrofoam container of chicken wings. His conscious-core demo gives the same effect.

Hard and sharp are Kweli's lyrics, even as they soothe the mind with some electric mental relaxation. "Treat me like a man and our flow will be divine / And quit watching those talk shows 'cause they're fucking up your mind," he advises on "Black Love," a proud ode to black folk that observes everything from upbringing to personal displays of affection. With the help of a subtle drum sequence and cooled-out piano samples (made audible by DJ Hi-Tek and Rampage), the production creates a laid-back, breezy atmosphere—sustained throughout the five-song demo. If you're looking for some "Black Love" on the real, hook up with the brother. Call 718-258-6040.


Talib Kweli

While heads in the so-called United States dispute over which coast is better, the U.K. is getting busy doin' its own thing. **PLASTECH MECCANIX** are a group out of Birmingham, England who, instead of clapping guns at their brethren or cooking up rocks in their moms' kitchen, are having a séance, resurrecting the art of freaking two turntables and a mike. The rhymes they kick on their—get this—*11*-song demo express the frustrations of urban youth with grassroots creativity. On "Roll With the Times," Plas raps, "Brothers and sisters, ladies and gents / I make sense like pounds and pence, dollars and cents, dead presidents / Whatever / All I know is being poor isn't clever." Other dope joints are "Reel Pleasure" and "Struggle for the Doe," which uses the jazz-inflected beat from Trends of Culture's "Who Got My Back." Presently, there's no American label support, but give these brothers an international call at 44-121-702-2463.

It seems Tupac isn't the only outlaw in hip hop today. **THE OWTLAWZ**, who hail from the Big Apple, break on all things wack with their scream-on-ya joint "Excuzez." Duo Hakim and T-Finesse trade flows hand over fist, hovering over a downbeat that hits harder than a two-by-four of petrified wood. At times the track is unbearably harsh with its ra-ta-tat drum pattern, but the tension is eased by slapstick-y trumpet samples—perfect, as they call out all the fake Willies and hard rocks with lyrical skill and boldness. Upon first slime of their slick sarcasm, **you'll instantly think about that one guy on the block who swears he's getting sweated by every label but never has a tape (we all know the type). "You ever heard of Wu-Tang?" Hakim mocks. "Yeah, I know *all* them guys."**

The flip side, "Owtlawz Rock The...," is less comedic, displaying the group's more verbally aggressive side. The in-camp production is tight—a head nodder's dream with a crispy snare and thudding bass drum. Addition: an ill guitar sample that gives the song a slightly eerie feel. "Excuzez"/"Owtlawz Rock The..." should be in stores by the time you read this, but if you can't get your hands on it, call Die Hard Recordings at 718-601-1103. And please, no excuses.

MC LYTE 'BAD AS I WANNA B'

EAST WEST/EEG

MICHAEL S. MILLER

Due in part to the fact that so few women hold positions of power at record labels, women in hip hop have always had to walk a thin line between aggressiveness and objectification. But since she was 16, MC Lyte transcended gender. In a Puma tracksuit and rugged kicks, she was an individualist who backed male macks like Positive K into corners and roasted any sucka-duck MC who dared test. The uncontested Queen of Hip Hop, Lyte consistently embodied true hardcore—no fronting allowed—and checked her peers on "10% Diss," Foxy Brown types on "Cappuccino," and fake MCs on "Beat Biter." All this *and* she had DJ K-Swiss. Damn.

But on Lyte's fifth album, *Bad As I Wanna B*, despite hard-hitting lyrics, most of the tracks are as phony as the second Nas album *and* a Mormon Bible. Judging by her unfortunate choice of producers, she's seemingly been blinded by the 1993 success of her radio-friendly "Ruffneck." Jermaine "Kris Kross" Dupri, R. Kelly, and Rashad Smith all fail to realize Lyte isn't your run-of-the-mill new jack, and hit her off with toothless funk that her lyrics overpower.

It gets worse: On "One on One," Lyte presents herself as a sexual offering to an unnamed celebrity. This lover-girl posturing coupled with pedantic themes gives the album a sinister, submissive subtext. Occasionally, Lyte even bites ideas, flavor, and identities from young rappers she no doubt influenced.

REVOLUTIONS

While the album has its moments—Xscape jazz up "Keep On Keepin' On"; "Have You Ever" is a butt-naked freestyle; and "TRG (The Rap Game)," a G-funk interpretation of Schoolly D's classic "PSK," drops science about the shadiness of the industry—ultimately *Bad As I Wanna B* is far from Lyte's best. If this is the direction Lyte truly wants to go in (as opposed to an insecure, misogynistic male record exec's idea of what a female MC should be), then maybe fans will understand and follow. But MC Lyte—one of the rawest MCs ever to pick up a mike—can, and should, do better.

Ronin Ro

JUST THE FACTS

REAL TO REEL: TOP BILLIN'

We know rappers can sell sneakers and soda, but can they generate income in the cinema? Will Smith helped *Independence Day* break a box office record (it netted $100 million in its first six days). Times have changed since the low-budget days of Run-D.M.C.'s 1988 *Tougher Than Leather*. With artists like Lauryn Hill (*Sister Act II*) and Queen Latifah (*Set It Off*) inking movie deals, the real question is, if the Hollywood cabbage continues to be so green, will some of hip hop's finest give up recording?

Compiled by David Bry, OJ Lima, and David Michaels

Ice Cube
Albums: 5; films: 6
Highest Certified Recording: *Lethal Injection*, 1993 (platinum)
Highest-Grossing Film: *Boyz N the Hood*, 1991 ($56 million)

Ice-T
Albums: 6; films: 6
Highest Certified Recording: *Home Invasion*, 1993 (gold)
Highest-Grossing Film: *New Jack City*, 1991 ($47.6 million)

Kid 'n Play
Albums: 3; films: 3
Highest Certified Recording: *Kid 'n Play's Funhouse*, 1990 (gold)
Highest-Grossing Film: *House Party*, 1990 ($26 million)

Tupac Shakur
Albums: 4; films: 3
Highest Certified Recording: *All Eyez on Me*, 1996 (quintuple platinum)
Highest-Grossing Film: *Poetic Justice*, 1993 ($27.5 million)

Will Smith (DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince)
Albums: 5; films: 4
Highest Certified Recording: *He's the D.J., I'm the Rapper*, 1988 (triple platinum)
Highest-Grossing Film: *Independence Day*, 1996 ($160 million [still climbing])

Fredro Starr (Onyx)
Albums: 2; films: 2
Highest Certified Recording: *Bacdafucup*, 1993 (platinum)
Highest-Grossing Film: *Clockers*, 1995 ($12.9 million)

Sources: Exhibitor Relations, RIAA

NIGHT BEAT
A CLUB LIST

Atlanta

At Cafe Echelon, [illegible] you can enjoy blends of old skool, contemporary R&B and hip hop. It was named the best urban contemporary dance club this year by Atlanta Magazine. Wednesday night you can [illegible] cool sounds of a live jazz performance. For an hour on Thursdays, Cafe Echelon turns into a comedy club, the mike being taken up by comedians such as [illegible] Mooney. Afterwards is late night dancing. Regular admission is $ 10.... For some after-hours excitement check out **Club 112**. The music is mostly R&B, but the DJ will honor any requests. Two balconies oversee a huge dance floor, complete with a giant TV screen that projects images of the dancing crowd as well as music videos. This club also serves breakfast for those tenacious clubbers who stay until closing time (usually 6 a.m.) **112** is known for free-hand bartenders, so you can be sure to get a potent drink. Admission ranges from $5-$10. For phat live hip hop action check out **Flavas Club & Grill**. It's stage has hosted Snoop Doggy Dog, Jay-Z, Foxy Brown, Fat Joe and many others. On any given night you'll get a smooth mix of hip hop. Thursday nights is open mike for up and coming rappers. In October, Flavas will be expanding with a brand new auditorium. So, if you are a true hip hop fan you'll want to check it out. Admission is $5-$10.

Washington D.C.

If you're puzzled about what to do when in D.C. look no further. If you can spare $7-$10, then cruise on through **The Ritz**. Wednesday through Sunday, you can fill your feet with hip-hop, reggae, techno, house, whatever! They even have live jazz on Saturday nights (for those cooler heads out there). With three levels, five dance rooms and six bars, you can't help but to have a good time.... For a smooth mix of acid jazz, dancehall, hip-hop, techno and international come by **The Spy Club**. Bounce to the beat and even grab a bite to eat while you visit their six bars and two levels. But if R&B and Reggae is more of your flow, don't fret, move off the main dance floor and make your way to the Cubana room.

Baltimore

Did you say rave? Then ya' can't miss **Paradox** every other Thursday night for some of the best rave parties in the country. They have a snack bar, if you get the munchies, and even a basketball court. And for that hip-hop stop, look no further, Friday nights are strictly hip-hop in the Chamber, one of the club's two dance floors.... **Choices** (formerly Gatsby's) is guaranteed to keep ya groovin'. It's newly remodeled interior puts you in the mood to party all night. But whatever you do, make sure you stop by Saturday nights when the music flows from old-skool to club to underground and last but not least, to hip-hop.

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NEW EDITION 'HOME AGAIN'
MCA

When five pimply Boston teens who called themselves New Edition eased their way onto the music scene back in 1983 with bubblegum soul hits like "Candy Girl," "Popcorn Love," and "Is This the End," their mission was clear: Ronnie (DeVoe), Bobby (Brown), Ricky (Bell), Mike (Bivins), and Ralph (Tresvant) wanted to find love, have fun, and effortlessly dance their little asses off. After Bobby split in 1986 (only to attain solo superstar status with *Don't Be Cruel*), Johnny Gill, best known for his 1984 duet, "Perfect Combination," with Stacy Lattisaw, joined as the voice. And the whole world watched the transfiguration of NE.

Although they haven't abandoned their solo careers, all six members reunite for *Home Again*, the group's first studio album in eight years. With production help from Sean "Puffy" Combs, Jermaine Dupri, and Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis (who produced the 1988 *Heartbreak* album), they sound wonderfully mature without straying too far from their original formula: melodies for the ladies, testosterone-filled mack moves for the fellas. Unfortunately, this formula also still contains short rap verses, as in the catchy first single "Hit Me Off," where Ronnie's horrid rhyme stops you dead in your tracks. Props to NE for mixing hip hop and R&B before Mary J., but in a world full of Wu-Tangs, mediocre lyrics simply will not do.

Home Again's shining moment arrives on the soulfully infectious Gerald Levert/Edwin Nicholas–produced "How Do You Like Your Love Served" (which may cause any former candy girl to think seriously about becoming a candy woman.) On the upbeat "Oh Yeah, It Feels So Good," Ralph once again speaks for the group; and, after hearing them together, one can't help but agree: "Now the time has come to return as one / And it's never been better / I never thought this day would come / And it feels so good to be back where we belong."

Shani Saxon

TINA TURNER 'WILDEST DREAMS' VIRGIN

Somewhere, in an alternate universe, there is a Tina Turner who is long and happily married to a loving, caring, nonabusive black man; who is aggressively political and openly supportive of black issues; and who sings duets over tracks produced by D'Angelo and DJ Clark Kent.

Which is not to say that until *that* Tina comes through the wormhole we have to somehow make do with the one we have. Admittedly, for me Tina Turner is akin to a guilty pleasure. Meaning, on one hand, she flat-out moves me. Why, here we are, nearly 27 years after "Fool In Love," 26 years since "Proud Mary." Not only does this rambunctious, wiggly 57-year-old woman still immolate a mike, she can open a show just by asking, "So...do you want some action?"

On the other hand, I'm endlessly frustrated by the fact that the most successful black American female rock 'n' roll vocalist—while openly enveloped in the creative force as well as the smooth, unwrinkled physique of blackness—doesn't seem to "stand" for anything black. This fact tells me that life is complex. As she says on "The Difference Between Us": "If you really love me, don't try and change me / You look in the mirror, it's not me you see." Thing is, I don't *really* know Tina, her true inner story. But I'm content, as Aretha said, to give an awesome survivor her propers.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, we are orbiting *Wildest Dreams*, Turner's fifth album. And amid a tasty remake of John Waite's stubborn 1984 hit "Missing You," a breathless Barry White duet (the title cut), and the James Bond *GoldenEye* theme is "Whatever You Want," a stark, dramatic soundscape for Tina's half-woman, half-machine voice. A style that producer Trevor Horn has previously crafted for the likes of Seal, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, the Art of Noise, and yes, Yes.

"On Silent Wings" is an airy, midtempo song about want and longing that Sting—who makes a brief cameo—seems to create with great regularity. Touching and lovely, it makes me wonder what a Tina Turner country album would sound like. Not that I'm exactly holding my breath, you understand.

Harry Allen

INCOGNITO 'INCOGNITO REMIXED'
VERVE

COURTESY OF VERVE

You know those CDs you put on when you're getting ready to go out? Add Incognito's fifth release, *Incognito Remixed*, to that collection. Some of the British acid jazz/funk band's fiercest hits—"Always There," "Givin' It Up"—have been newly reworked by Masters at Work (featuring Louie Vega), Roger Sanchez, and the band's front man and founder, Bluey Maunick. "Barumba," mixed by Daniel Maunick (Bluey's son), combines the drum 'n' bass beats of jungle with a tender jazz groove, and Pete Rock guides the soulful "Roots" into hip hop territory. *Remixed* surges with spirit and flows with funk. So beware: You might not make it to the club.

Andréa M. Duncan

ACTOR MEKHI PHIFER'S TOP 10

SIGN: Capricorn

ROOTS: Harlem, N.Y.

CURRENT PLAYLIST:

THE ISLEY BROTHERS—*Beautiful Ballads*

MARVIN GAYE—*Here, My Dear*

AL GREEN—"I'm Still in Love With You"

SADE—*Love Deluxe*

ERIC B. & RAKIM—*Paid in Full*

BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS—*Criminal Minded*

THE O'JAYS—*Greatest Hits*

THE FUGEES—"Mista Mista"

BOB MARLEY—*Legend*

SLICK RICK—*The Great Adventures of Slick Rick*

SONGS HE PLAYS WHEN IT'S TIME TO GET BUSY:
Anything by Sade, the Isley Brothers, Al Green, or Marvin Gaye

LAST MOVIE HE RENTED:
Desperado

SONG THAT ROCKED HIS HIGH SCHOOL DANCES:
L.L. Cool J—"Jingling Baby"

FIRST LIVE SHOW HE ATTENDED:
Run-D.M.C., Kurtis Blow, and Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde at Madison Square Garden, 1985 (he went with his mother)

RAPPER HE RESPECTS THE MOST:
L.L. Cool J, because he's a *real* businessman

VIBE RATERS

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☥—"Dinner With Delores." Trippy Prince rock.

THE TREACHEROUS THREE—"The Body Rock." Now everybody—scream!

GEORGE MICHAEL—"Fastlove." At his best.

ME'SHELL NDEGÉOCELLO—*Peace Beyond Passion.* Crazy. Sexy. Cool.

HELTAH SKELTAH—*Nocturnal.* Dark and lovely.

ARETHA FRANKLIN—"Amazing Grace." Soul's true peak.

COMMON—*Resurrection.* Can't get enough.

JAMES TAYLOR—"Fire and Rain." Always brings tears.

FUNKADELIC—"You Scared the Lovin' Outta Me." Funk rock gem.

ERIC BENÉT 'TRUE TO MYSELF' WARNER BROS.

Somewhere in Hitsville, U.S.A., aging music critics wearing faded dashikis and bad attitudes gulp endless glasses of chilled white wine, reminiscing about the days of soul. Years after buying their first 7-inch singles and discovering the pagan wail of Chaka Khan or the gospel sex of Al Green, these scribes refuse to accept that the old Motown sound is dead, Rose Royce hasn't recorded in decades, and Gamble and Huff stopped producing hit records years ago. Watching them weep, I'm tempted to paraphrase the sweaty Godfather of Soul and tell them to dig deeper in papa's brand new bag—disregarding designer R&B groups or plastic funk—and grow some soul of their own.

"Everybody wants to rise above," swoons new soul visionary Eric Benét on the title track of his second album, *True to Myself*. Incorporating elements of sentimental smooth grooves, bleak reality, and funky black erotica with pure pop production, Benét will undoubtedly be compared to the latest retro-nouveau stylists, D'Angelo and Maxwell (since all three are heavily influenced by Prince and Stevie Wonder), but it would be unfair to dwell on the subject.

Benét, who coproduced the majority of the brilliant *True to Myself* with his cousin George Nash Jr. (funkateer Roger Troutman produced the joyfully Sly remake of "If You Want Me To Stay"), creates a romantic lush-life soundscape. A B3 organ, melodic strings, and elegant percussion give songs like "I'll Be There" and "All in the Game" the bubble-bath sophistication of Burt Bacharach collaborating with Babyface. Without swaggering in pimp mode, Benét still manages to capture the fire and desire of modern romance. Even at his most overwrought, as on "While You Were Here," he has a flair for dramatics.

Although his silky voice is perfect for ballads, on "What If We Was Cool" Benét isn't afraid of swimming through the funk like Sir Nose. By combining musical diversity and clever imagination, Benét has created an important album for those running late for the Soul Train. *Michael A. Gonzales*

KEVIN MAHOGANY 'KEVIN MAHOGANY' WARNER BROS.

Displaying eclectic Eddie Jefferson–informed riffs and Teddy Pendergrass soul, Kevin Mahogany, on his self-titled fourth album, defiantly blurs genres. Accompanied by a war chest of talent including Kirk Whalum, Larry Goldings, James Weidman, and Greg Hutchinson, Mahogany, who recently portrayed Big Joe Turner in the film *Kansas City*, delves into jazz, country, R&B, and blues, superbly covering songs ranging from Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes' "Yesterday I Had the Blues" to Barry Manilow's "When October Goes." He's controlled on Blood, Sweat and Tears' 1971 "I Love You More Than You'll Ever Know" and scat-possessed on the Mongo Santamaria–inspired "Little Black Samba." And on the appropriately named, Mahogany-written-and-arranged "Still Swingin'," he pays proper tribute to the big band era. ***Terrence Jones***

REVOLUTIONS EMOTIONAL

Your mom wants you to go

Your friends want

Your coach wants you to GO play Ball at the junior

Your high school guidance

ANYBODY EVER ASK YOU WHERE YOU WANT TO GO?

How about the Air Force? Hey, it might be the perfect place for you. In the Air Force, you'll get the time and opportunity to figure out exactly what it is you want to do. You'll earn a good salary, get most of your tuition paid for college classes and

BERES HAMMOND 'LOVE FROM A DISTANCE'

HARMONY HOUSE/VP RECORDS

Only Barry White can rival lovers' rock–conscious reggae singer Beres Hammond's gift for plunging listeners deep into the voluptuousness of romance–the euphoria and the heartbreak. For three decades, Hammond's throbbing, sand-in-satin vocals and commanding musical intelligence have conjured up the sensitive, understanding loverman girls yearn for and smart boys emulate.

His latest, *Love From a Distance*, is no exception. From the opening "Much Have Been Said," Hammond wraps females in tender, loving arms and shows males how it's done. Passion is passion, and like those notorious 17th-century Brit poets, Hammond's emotion is big enough to encompass godly feelings as well. Sometimes he even compounds those two kinds of love, as in the title track, a reggae chart-topper from last spring. The clincher is the intoxicating aroma of danger given off by Hammond's confessions of his romantic antics and his badass revolutionary songs, like the paradigm of African positivity "Black Beauty" and the 1995 hit "Can't Stop a Man."

Actually, more tunes on that tip would have been welcome. *Love From a Distance* is virtually a straight run of tight rub-a-dub-inna-corner tracks freckled with a few up-tempo numbers to break up those steamy embraces. But tastefully subtle instrumentals and harmonies keep the Voice where it should be–front and center. Hammond needs little assistance: He wrote and produced all but four of the LP's 14 tracks for his Harmony House label, with contributions from Jamaican mixing-board wizards Mikey Bennett and Richard "Bello" Bell, bassist Flabba Holt, and producer/drummer Colin "Bulby" York.

WILLIAM RICHARDS

Canadian hip hop reggae group Dream Warriors cut nicely through achingly lush strings and Hammond's serpentine vocals (replete with subdued but choice mutterings) on "Highlight of the Day." And Shaggy swings his boombastic ax through "Take Time To Love," yet another sublime example of Beres Hammond's genius for weighing the various manifestations of love–and making them equal.

Elena Oumano

GEOFFROY DE SOISHEN

DOS OF SOUL 'COME AROUND' DEF JAM

REVOLUTIONS

Dos of Soul's flatliner debut helps clarify the distinction between classic old-school soul and the predictable formula of recent mainstream R&B. Shame this group falls into the latter category. Despite occasional shining harmonies, *Come Around* can't get past the uninspired, familiar production of Soul Convention (best known for Mary J. Blige's "You Remind Me"). As a result, the album plunges into an awful mess of slow to midtempo songs further sullied by weak, flat lyrics. Let's use "Turn and Out" as an example: "We could do it all night, baby / I could make you feel right, baby / We could do it real slow, baby / Oh baby, don't you know." Rillight.

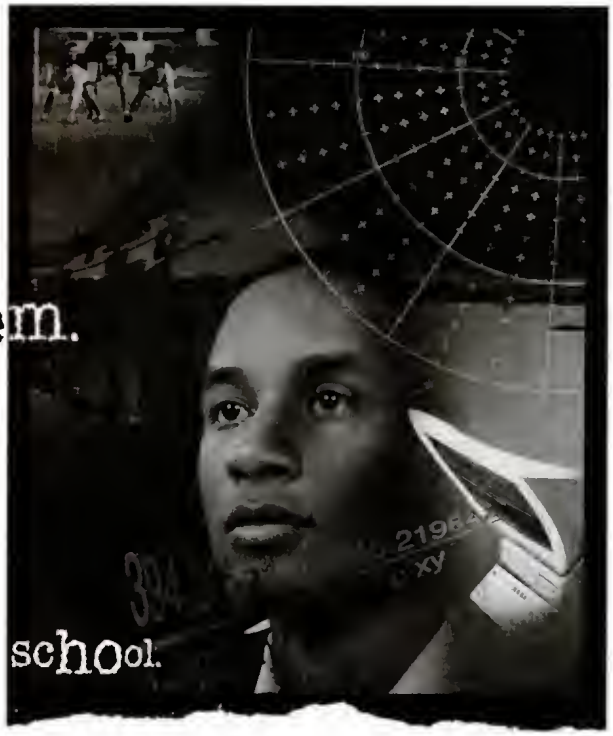
Raquel Cepeda

get A job.

you to go Hang out with them.

college he went to.

counselor wants you to go to tech school.



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AVAILABLE NOW AT BLOCKBUSTER MUSIC

RAS KASS 'SOUL ON ICE'

PATCHWERK/PRIORITY

BRIAN "B" CROSS

It's been two years since Ras Kass released "Won't Catch Me Runnin' "/ "Remain AnonymouS," the legendary 12-inch that has made *Soul on Ice* so highly anticipated. Ras's problem getting a decent record deal wasn't a matter of his sounding good—producers Battlecat, Bird, Flip, and Vooodu handled that. The obstacle was his sheer talent; like the gone-too-soon Freestyle Fellowship, his scripts are too complex to fit into the stereotypical L.A. rap scene. Ras kicks fiercely politicized diatribes with wicked wordplay that goes over the heads of record executives but gets mad respect from the hip hop community. Coolio recognized Ras's talent, became his manager, and appears on the swinging, radio-friendly "Drama," a cynical commentary on the dating game: "Men be tryin' to get laid / Women be tryin' to get paid / So somebody got to get played."

REVOLUTIONS

Named after Eldridge Cleaver's classic 1968 autobiography, *Soul on Ice* explores the various hypocrisies and dichotomies surrounding the black man in America. Though he knows it's no remedy, Ras, on the title track (which samples the Average White Band's 1975 "School Boy Crush"), will still "smoke like a chimney, drink like a Kennedy," simply because he sees no other way out: "Give me 50,000 black, angry role models / Take me to D.C. / I'll throw the first fuckin' bottle / 'Cause I don't give a fuck about a menial existence / And I don't give a fuck about non-violent resistance."

Punctuated by an ominous church bell, "Nature of the Threat" is fittingly dark and gothic as Ras runs down the history of racism. "To deceive us / Eventually Michelangelo was commissioned to paint a white picture of Jesus," he explains. Then, on "Evil That Men Do," over flowing ethereal tones (think Lonnie Liston Smith when he gets really spacey), he explains how oppression affected his self-image. Ras Kass holds nothing back, and it's his gritty realism and clever metaphors that make *Soul on Ice* essential.

Judson Kilpatrick

Josina, Necia, Wendi, LaTanyia

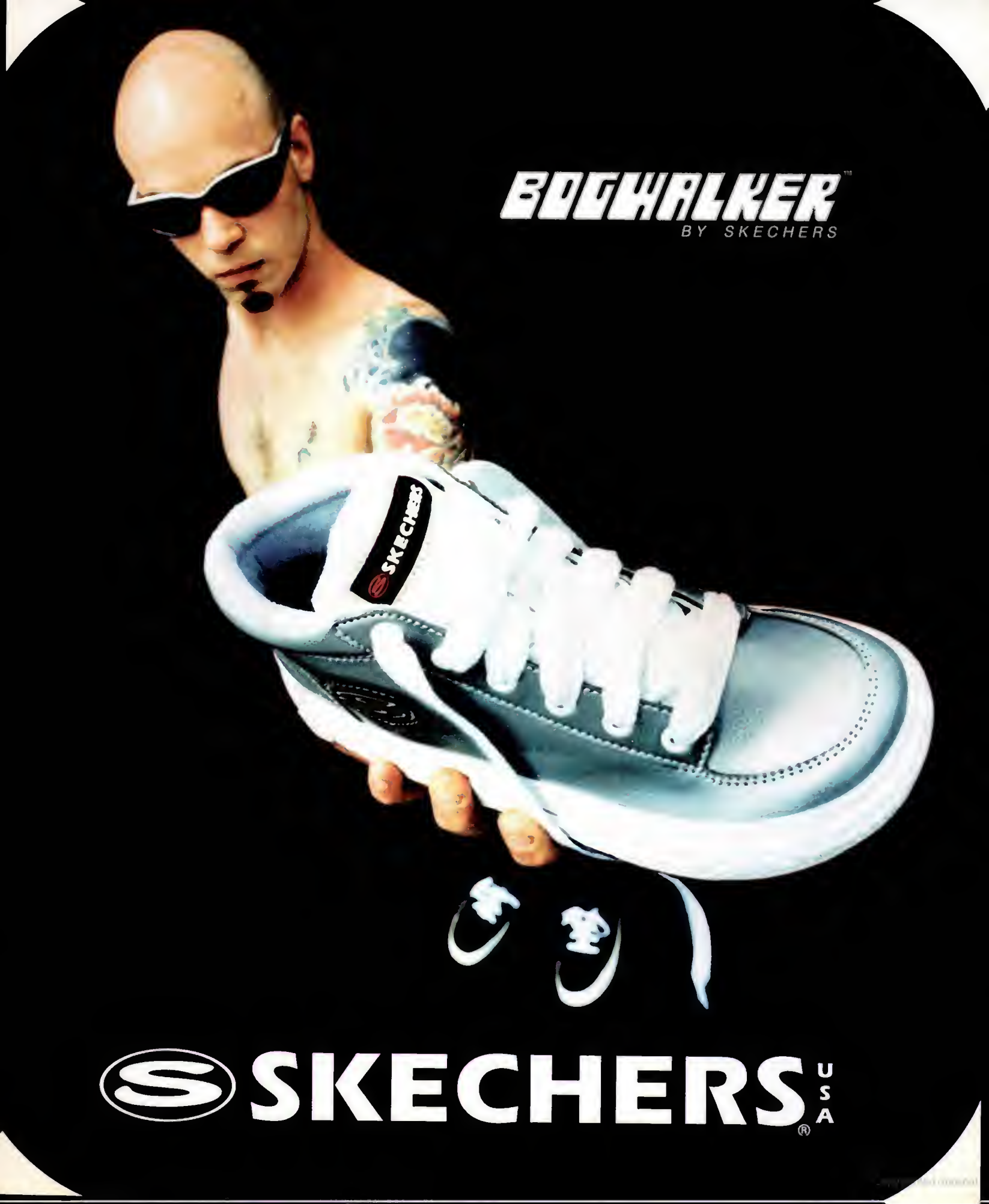
ARNOLD TURNER

FOR REAL 'FREE'

ROWDY

After For Real's refreshing 1994 debut, *It's a Natural Thang*, the harmonious L.A. quartet left A&M Records and hooked up with hitmaker Dallas Austin in an effort to emulate heartfelt early Motown soul. But energy and dynamic vocals are needed to pull off the rehashed melodies and sappy lyrics found on the bulk of *Free*, especially "Good Morning Sunshine" and "The Saddest Song." Vocalists Josina Eldar, LaTanyia Baldwin, Wendi Williams, and Necia Bray sound like a chorus of sedated Karyn Whites—no overexerted sore throats here. Although "Will U Love Me," produced by gospel kin Mario Winans, shines with rhythmic serenity, it can't save *Free*, which has all the depth and passion of a cold lump of clay.

Anika Robertson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THE DETAILS

VIBE Fashion: "Into the Night"

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Black wool hat $270, black wool turtleneck $320, and black single-breasted wool coat $1,450, all by **Yohji Yamamoto** available at Yohji Yamamoto, N.Y.C., June Blaker, Chicago, and Alan Bilzerian, Boston.

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Brown wool car coat $710 and brown silk tie $75, both by **Alberto Biani per New York** available at Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C. and L.A.; maroon button-down shirt $180 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Spazio Romeo Gigli, N.Y.C., and Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C., Boston, and Beverly Hills; brown cotton velvet six-button vest $310 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Ultimo, Chicago, and Spazio Romeo Gigli, N.Y.C.

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Brown waxed leather double-breasted coat $2,040 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C., Boston, and Beverly Hills, and Barneys New York, N.Y.C. and Beverly Hills; cream ribbed cotton fitted shirt $280 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Theodore, Beverly Hills, and Bagutta, N.Y.C.; brown-and-red wool gingham trouser $205 by **Alberto Biani per New York** available at Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C. and L.A.

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Black wool three-button maxicoat $2,190 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Barneys New York, N.Y.C. and Beverly Hills, Emphatics, Pittsburgh, and Spazio Romeo Gigli, N.Y.C.; black hooded stretch top $560 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Spazio Romeo Gigli, N.Y.C.

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Top: Brown herringbone wool coat with faux-fur collar $1,580 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Ultimo, Chicago, and Spazio Romeo Gigli, N.Y.C.; midnight-and-beige cotton frill front shirt $370 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Spazio Romeo Gigli, N.Y.C., and Saks Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C., Boston, and Beverly Hills; brown moleskin single-breasted suit $495 by **C.P. Company** available at Barneys New York (select stores), Dosa, N.Y.C. and San Francisco, and C.P. Company Retail Store, N.Y.C. Bottom: Brown single-breasted wool coat $2,450 by **Yohji Yamamoto** available at Yohji Yamamoto, N.Y.C., June Blaker, Chicago, and Alan Bilzerian, Boston; cream button-down shirt $185 and tan-and-black scarf $140, both by **Emporio Armani** available at Emporio Armani stores nationwide; black felt hat by **Makins**.

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Black single-breasted suit $1,295 by **Paul Smith Women** available at Barneys New York, N.Y.C., Fred Segal, L.A., and Blake, Chicago; black hooded stretch top $560 by **Romeo Gigli** available at Spazio Romeo Gigli, N.Y.C.

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READER RECORD REVIEW

Adriana Evans • Adriana Evans • *PMP/Laud/RCA*

Adriana Evans is a refreshing reminder that the old school is still alive and well. In her self-titled debut, Evans takes music back to melodic voices, smooth lyrics and jazzy instrumentals. The result is an entire album that you can put on and just... groove.

The album soothes with low, bluesy ballads like "Say You Won't" and the sixties-ish "Looking For Your Love," Adriana still keeps up with what modern R&B is today and maintains her distinct style. Just listen to "Love Me", an upbeat love song with some bump to it; and the Groove Theory-esque "Swimming."

Unfortunately, *Adriana Evans* doesn't hold up with faster songs like "Hey Brother" and "Reality," though they come with good messages. And at times the album seems like one long song split 12 different ways.

But it's a good song. Adriana Evans is blessed with a stellar vocal style that gives her just what she needs—a good voice to carry the tracks and well-arranged instrumentals. The kind that makes you *feel*—sometimes sad, sometimes sexy. Always cool.

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GORDON PARKS

"One stormy night I was riding with the Panthers, and the cops were following us," says 83-year-old renaissance man Gordon Parks, lighting his trademark pipe in his penthouse apartment on the East Side of Manhattan. One of the Black Panthers, sighting the police with shotguns in the car behind them, challenged Parks to rethink the nonviolent philosophy of his second autobiography, *A Choice of Weapons*. Parks was unmoved. "I said, 'Look, you have a .45 automatic there on your lap, I have a 35 mm camera on mine. I think my weapon is just as powerful as yours if it's used right, and that's why I'm risking my neck in this car with you.'

"It was quite a different time and there were pressures, choices to make," he continues, ruminating on his fabled career as *Life*'s first African-American photographer (1949) and Hollywood's first African-American director (1969), as well as a best-selling author, composer, and painter. But hard choices were second nature for Parks. Born in Fort Scott, Kansas in 1912 and raised as the youngest of 15 children during the depression, he had to leave high school early to earn his keep. At 25, having just bought his first camera, Parks fell into Puget Sound while trying to photograph gulls. From then on, he would fall into just about every creative opportunity imaginable. From close-ups of Brazilian slums to candid shots of Brother Malcolm, Parks's work became incomparable.

His first film, *The Learning Tree*—adapted from his autobiographical novel of the same name—was his favorite. But 1971's *Shaft* "made all the money and got all the publicity," says Parks. "It was *not* a blaxploitation film. It was just about a handsome black detective who didn't take any crap. It was a way to give young people a hero." After Parks directed the sequel, *Shaft's Big Score*, Hollywood bit (and bastardized) his formula with an onslaught of blaxploitation flicks. Parks, however, moved on to direct other features such as *Super Cops* and *Leadbelly*.

Last year, he donated his voluminous archives to the Library of Congress. *Glimpses Toward Infinity*, his 12th book, combining his poetry, paintings, and photographs, is due out this month from Bulfinch Press. Ever on the move, Parks is busy finishing a variety of other projects. "I like a couple of things going at once to keep me very involved," he says. "I feel I was a late starter and I missed a lot of things in my early life, and I've got to make up for it." You have, Brother Parks. You have.

Cheo Tyehimba

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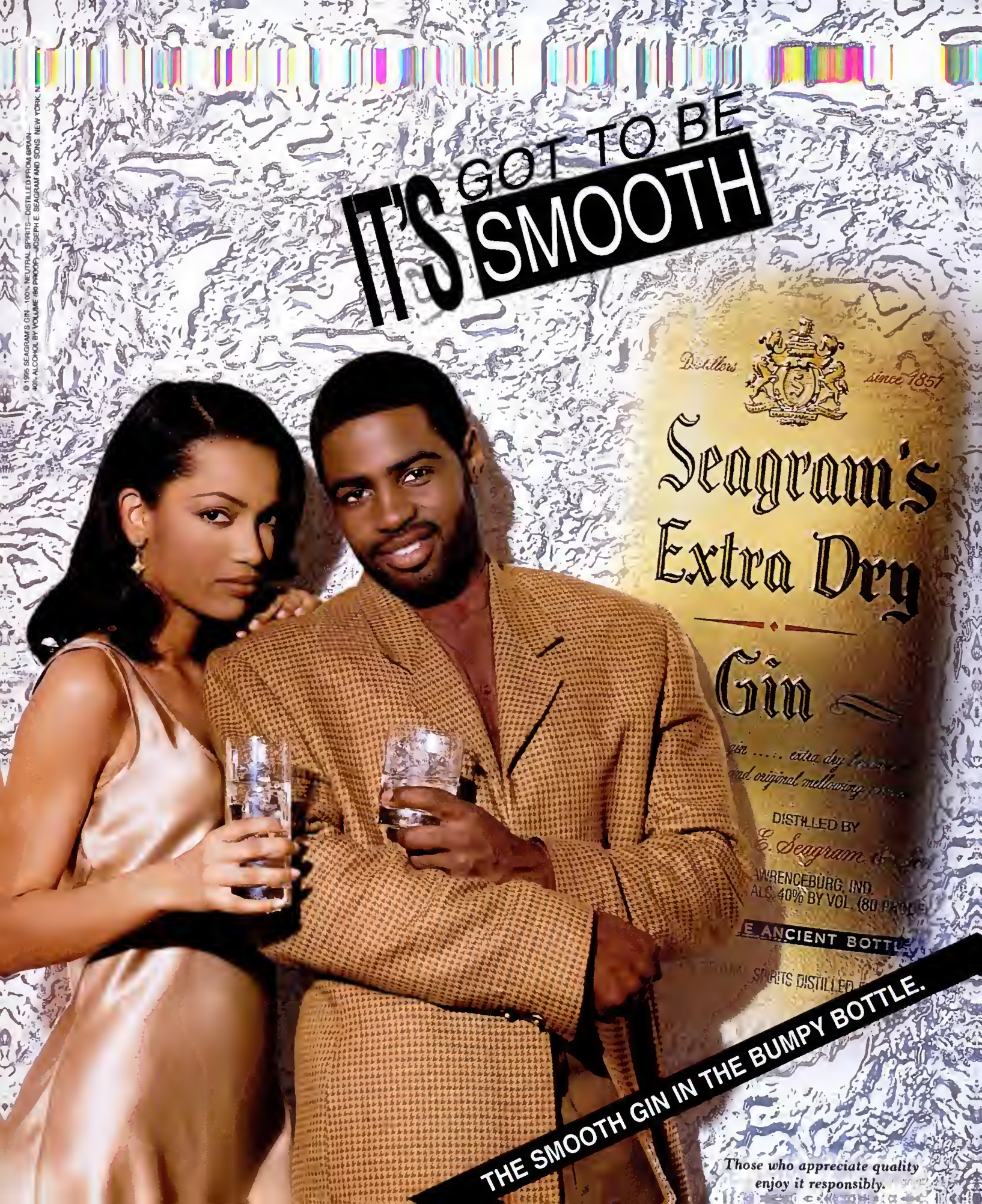
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It seems that besides coupes, wagons and sedans, we also make one heck of a final exam.

We've heard of many instances where Saturns have been given as graduation gifts. (Most of us here remember getting pen and pencil sets.) In that case, we suspect this year's graduating class will be quite impressed with the newly redesigned Saturn coupe.

Apparently, a Saturn showroom isn't the only place you can go to learn more about Saturn. All across the country, some pretty prestigious universities are offering us up as a case study in everything from organizational theory to marketing to global logistics. Not only that, we're on the recommended reading list of a few sociology departments, as well. This is pretty heady stuff, especially when you consider we didn't even exist as a company until a few years ago. And now to be held up as a role model for future MBAs to study, why, it's quite an honor. It's also a very good example of what happens when you do your homework.

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